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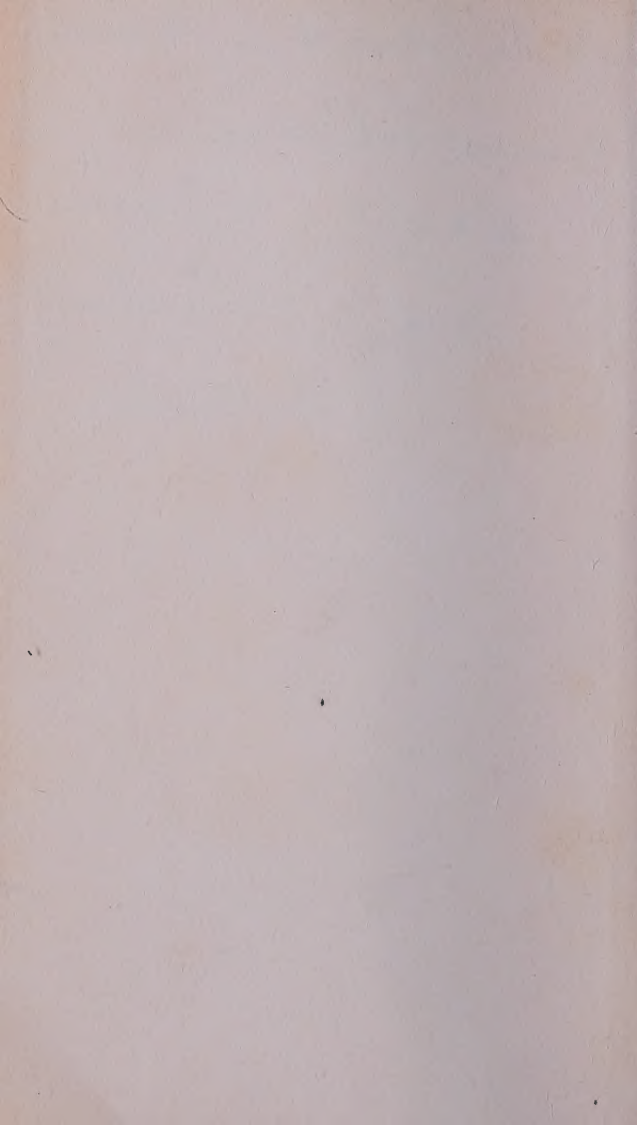
Right. Rev. Edward L. Parsons

a small volume on the

philosophy of St Francis

with the best notes of

the teacher





The Man

Who Was

Nobody



THE MAN WHO WAS NOBODY

or

HOW SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI
WON THE
HEART OF THE WORLD

by

ANTONY LINNEWEBER, O.F.M.

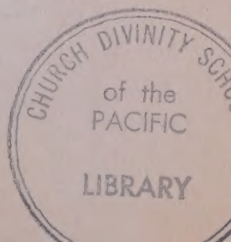
Author of "THE MAN WHO SAW GOD"



"See how the mass of men worry themselves into nameless graves, while here and there a great, unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality."

—Emerson.

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DEDICATION

*To Jesus Christ, Who startled
the world with the paradox ex-
emplified in the Little Man of
Assisi, "The last shall be the
first."*

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BY
ANTONY LINNEWEBER, O. F. M.

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FOREWORD

There is no flaw in the love of Jesus Christ for every one of us.

We often wonder what would happen to a perfect lover of Jesus Christ. If such a man devoted his life to the glorious work of making Him better known and loved, he would, of course, succeed. "Men of one idea are masterful even when narrow; but when a man of powerful intellect and varied gifts ransacks heaven and earth for resources for a single purpose, it gives a simplicity and charm to intercourse with him which carries all before it." (Anonymous). But what would happen to such a self-sacrificing, disinterested lover and apostle of Jesus Christ? Would men overlook him as he overlooks himself? St. Francis of Assisi is the answer.

These pages are an interpretation of the phenomenon which everyone admits: that Francis won the heart of the world, not only for Christ, but also for himself.

At the same time the book gives us a brief but comprehensive outline of the spiritual life. It tells the story of the Man of Assisi, but only to illustrate the lessons each chapter contains.

A. L., O.F.M.

October 4, 1927.

NOTE: This treatise was written for the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Franciscan Educational Conference, held at St. Francis College, Athol Springs, New York, July 1, 2, 3, 1927. The Friars present requested that it appear, not only in the Annual Convention Report, but also in book-form.

THE MAN
WHO WAS NOBODY

THE MAN WHO WAS NOBODY

I

BROTHER MASSEO ASKS A QUESTION

Billions of human beings have lived on this little planet of ours. Could it be possible for one man to win the heart of the world? There can no longer be a question as to whether such a conquest could be made or not. One man has actually won the heart of the world. He won it centuries ago, he has held it to this day, and he will hold it to the end of time. That man is Francis of Assisi. The only question that remains is: How did he do it? "Francis, whence comes it that all the world runs after thee?" Brother Masseo asked, and men are asking the same question today.

St. Francis was a saint, a mystic, a reformer. I am going to state as briefly as possible what I mean by these terms. After that it will require but a few words to explain the phenomenon how one man, a preacher of the Gospel by his example and word and writings, a man who was nobody in his own estimation; won and held the heart of his audience: the World!

PART ONE

SAINT

II

EXTERNAL RELIGION

1. Four Essentials
2. Francis

THE MAN WHO WAS NOBODY

II

EXTERNAL RELIGION

A saint is a person who takes the right attitude in regard to the four essentials of external religion.

I

FOUR ESSENTIALS

First Essential:

A saint takes the right attitude in regard to the first essential of religion: the Creed. The Creed contains what we must believe. What does it mean to believe? What is faith? "Faith," St. Paul tells us, "is the evidence of things that appear not." How can the Apostle claim that faith makes the truths of our holy faith evident? He wishes to say that it is as easy for a man who has the gift of faith to believe as it is easy for a man with eyes to see.

There are three kinds of facts or truths: those which we discover alone, that is, without special assistance; those

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which we acquire with the help of our fellowmen; and those which are revealed to us by God. For the first set of facts or truths no faith is required; for the second, human faith is required; and for the third divine faith. Divine faith is a gift we lack since the Fall. It is a supernatural gift God bestows on those who remove the obstacles and ask for it. "Ask and ye shall receive." Faith has for its subject and eliciting principle the understanding, but for its moral and efficient cause, the will, cooperating with the grace of God. If we were asked how we can believe in the Real Presence, or in any of the other truths of revelation, while our interrogator can not believe in them, we should say: "We believe because we have faith, and if you had this faith you, too, would believe." It is a question of the possession or non-possession of a supernatural gift of God. If anyone dies without the gift of faith, we know that it is not God's fault. Brisbane wrote on the day following the death of William Jennings Bryan: "What would the world give . . . if Bryan could come back and make another speech of thirty seconds on: 'What I saw, what I

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felt, and what I knew the minute after I died.' " The reflection of Brisbane, and of all men, who lack the gift of divine faith!

The Son of God spent an eternity on the other side. He became Man, He revealed all we need to know about the hereafter, and He gave us the gift of faith. We know, therefore, by faith; but the man who has only reason to enlighten him remains in darkness in regard to "the things that appear not." We have reason, and it is the Will of God that we use it. Doctor Brownson, the great American philosopher and convert to the Church, used his reason, and he gives us the result of his study in the following words: "I never in a single instance found an article, dogma, proposition or definition of faith which embarrassed me as a logician, or which I would, so far as my own reason is concerned, have changed or modified or in any way altered from what I found it, even if I had been free to do so. I have never found my reason struggling against the teachings of the Church, or felt it restrained, or myself reduced to a state of mental slavery. I have, as a Cath-

olic, felt and enjoyed a mental freedom which I never conceived possible while I was a non-Catholic."

Those who claim that we do not use reason are the very ones who fail to use it. "The man," writes Chesterton, "is not really using his reason when he talks about having to give up his reason. He is using a cant phrase he has always heard used against Catholics." Reason enables us to become convinced of the truths of revelation, but it does not enable us to believe. Before we can believe God must give us the gift of faith. We must have divine faith before we can believe in a way pleasing to God and deserving of supernatural reward. "This," St. Chrysostom remarks, "places our holy religion beyond the reach of mere human argument that might attempt to overthrow it." When St. Peter made his wonderful profession of faith in the Divinity of Christ, our Lord took care to remind him that "flesh and blood (that is, reason) had not revealed it to him, but God."

We may be convinced that certain objects are in a dark room, but we can not see them until someone turns on the light.

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So we may be convinced that all the Creed contains is true, but we can not believe until God turns on the light of faith. In some instances faith is given suddenly, as in the case of St. Paul; in other instances it is given only after years of prayerful seeking, as in the case of Cardinal Newman. If we were baptized as infants, faith was infused into our souls when we were but a few days old. "What dost thou ask?" the Church says to those about to be baptized. The answer is: "Faith." "What doth faith bring thee to?" The answer: "Life everlasting." When we were old enough we were told what to believe. From that day on it depended upon us to increase the gift of faith, especially by living up to it, so that it would become more and more "the evidence of things that appear not."

One of the principal means of keeping the faith is a sinless life. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." One of the principal means of increasing faith is one that is open to the educated and uneducated alike: living up to it with the simplicity of a child. "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter

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into the Kingdom of Heaven." "If I begin to worry about problems instead of acting on revelation, my will weakens, my action becomes halting, my intellect clouded, the practice of Christian virtue peters out: I break up, and fall to pieces in the outside world of disorder." (Montgomery Carmichael)

Occasionally, we meet or hear of a renegade priest or nun or layman. If we do, we must not be unduly shocked. If we knew their past as God does, we should discover either that they never really lived "by faith," or, if they did at one time, that they ceased to do so long before their fall. The loss of faith, like the loss of health, is inevitable under certain conditions. "For ourselves," writes Cardinal Newman, "let us but obey God's voice in our hearts, and I will venture to say we shall have no doubts practically formidable about the Scriptures. Find out the man who strictly obeys the law within him, and yet is an unbeliever as regards the Bible, and then it will be time enough to consider all that variety of proof by which the truth of the Bible is confirmed to us. Our doubts, if we have any, will be found

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to arise after disobedience; it is bad company or corrupt books which lead to unbelief. It is sin which quenches the Holy Spirit. And if we but obey God strictly, in time (through His blessing) faith will become like sight; we shall have no more difficulty in finding what will please God than in moving our limbs, or in understanding the conversation of our familiar friends. This is the blessedness of confirmed obedience. Let us aim at attaining it; and in whatever proportion we now enjoy it, praise and bless God for His unspeakable gift."

We have the light of day to see, we have the light of reason to understand, we have the light of faith to believe, and in heaven we shall have the light of glory to see God face to face. The degree of the light of glory we shall enjoy in heaven will depend on the degree of faith we attained in this world. The assent which faith enables us to give is different in kind from any other. We believe with greater certainty that Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament than that our Holy Father is in Rome. We know the one on divine, the other on human testimony—

an infinite difference. The truths of revelation rest upon the testimony of One who can not deceive nor be deceived. All human knowledge rests on the testimony of fallible men. Speaking of his friend, Doctor Gasquet, Herbert Spencer declared: "I would give everything I have and own to have his faith. To me it has been a revelation to find a man with absolute faith."

If "faith is the evidence of things that appear not," it does not mean, however, that we have no difficulties. Our faith is bristling with difficulties, but we are not surprised. We find difficulties at every turn in the natural order. It is evident that electricity exists; that our minds produce mental pictures of the objects we see with our bodily eyes; that a tree comes from a small seed; that every visible object has, besides the qualities we see, an invisible something that makes it what it is—substance. We can not deny the phenomena of nature; yet they present countless difficulties we can not solve. "What do we know about substance or matter?" Cardinal Newman asked; and he answered: "Just as much as the greatest philosopher, and that is nothing."

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We have countless difficulties in the natural order, but no doubts; so we have countless difficulties in the supernatural order, but no doubts. "A thousand difficulties," Newman once declared, "do not constitute one doubt." Many fear they are losing their faith because they are troubled about religious difficulties they have heard but can not solve. We ought to be glad when we hear religious difficulties we never heard before. We ought to ask for an explanation. If we do, we shall lose our ignorance, not our faith. If faith to us "is the evidence of things that appear not," the ridicule of the world will not affect us. We will pity those who sneer at us, and pray: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The condition of the so-called wise ones of this world will make us unspeakably grateful to God Who has bestowed His gift of gifts, the gift of faith, upon us. "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to the little ones."

Robert Hugh Benson wrote on one oc-

casion: "I have been asked lately whether I am 'happy' in the Catholic Church. Happy! What can one say to a question like that? Does one ask a man who wakes up from a foolish dream to sunshine in his room, and to life and reality, whether he is happy? Of course many non-Catholics are happy. I was happy myself as an Anglican; but as a Catholic one does not think about it. The whole of life is different; that is all that can be said. Faith is faith, not hope; God is light, not twilight; eternity, heaven, hell, purgatory, sin and its consequences—these things are facts, not guesses and conjectures, and not suspicions desperately clung to. 'How hard it is to be a Christian!' moans the persevering non-Catholic. 'How impossible it is to be anything else!' cries the Catholic."

"Thank God," a simple woman of faith once declared, "that I am not so educated that even God Almighty can not teach me anything." To the saint faith is not intellectual slavery, but the very opposite. He often recites the Creed, he often makes acts of faith, he never ceases to pray with Father Faber:

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O gift of gifts, O grace of faith,
My God, how can it be
That Thou Who hast discerning love
Shouldst give that gift to me?

How many hearts Thou mightest have
chosen,
More innocent than mine.
How many souls more worthy far
Of that sweet touch of Thine.

Second Essential:

A saint, I said, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to the Creed. To a saint "faith is the evidence of things that appear not." It is not intellectual slavery, but the greatest possible relief to the mind. "The truth shall make you free." A saint is grateful beyond words to Him Who can not deceive nor be deceived, for the revelation He has given us. He has no reason to exclaim: "If I only knew what to believe." He knows exactly what to believe. A saint is grateful for the light of day, for the light of reason, but above all, for the light of faith.

A saint, in the second place, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to the

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second essential of external religion, the Commandments.

I am the Lord thy God,
My name shalt thou not take in vain.
Keep thou the Sabbath holy.
Honor thy father's name.
Be at peace with your neighbor.
Keep thyself pure in heart.
Steal not; do thou honestly labor.
The truth do thou always impart.
Covet not the wife of thy brother,
Nor his holdings, whatever they may be.
Do this and God will reward thee
With life everlastingly.

The Commandments are the most wonderful set of laws ever enacted. They are the product of a Divine Mind. Who would consider it possible to give the world a complete code of morality in Ten Commandments? If men agreed to live up to the laws of God, the nations could scrap their navies, disband their armies, and there would be no need of officials to maintain law and order. Thank God, we do not have to exclaim: "If I only knew what to do and what not to do to avoid failure and to attain happiness,

I would surely do it." We do know just what to do and what not to do. A few years ago Mr. Bok offered a fifty thousand dollar prize for the best peace essay. It would have been better to have offered money to spread the knowledge of the Commandments. We can not improve on God's plan for peace.

The violation of one of the Commandments is called a sin. What is the nature of sin? It is in the supernatural world what a revolution is in an ideal country. I have seen men commit sin, some will say, and I have committed sin myself, but nothing startling has happened. If I shoot a man and it does not kill him because he happened to be wearing a steel breastplate, it is not my fault that the man survived. As far as my conscience is concerned I am a murderer. So if mortal sin does not actually dethrone God, it is not my fault, it is only because God is immune to the attacks of rebels.

"Sin," writes Cardinal Newman, "is an easy thing to us, we think little of it, we do not understand how the Creator can think much of it, we can not bring our imagination to believe that it deserves retribution, and when, even in this world,

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punishments follow upon it, we explain them away and turn our minds from them. But consider what sin is in itself, it is rebellion against God, it is a traitor's act who aims at the overthrow and death of his Sovereign; it is that, if I may use a strong expression, which, could the Divine Governor of the World cease to be, would be sufficient to bring it about."

One way of learning a great deal about sin, I mean enough to induce us to shun it more than any other evil in the world, is to study its effects.

There are two worlds of intelligent beings, the world of Angels and the world of men. In both worlds the revolution of sin took place. Scripture tells us what happened to the rebellious Angels and what happened to our first parents. Faith tells us what will happen to us, individually, if we die as rebels. There are many difficulties we can not solve in regard to sin, but we are not surprised. We have the same difficulties in the natural order. We have difficulties, but no doubts. If I disregard the law which tells me not to drink poison, the result of one violation will be death. Terrible, but true. In like manner, if I violate one of the Command-

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ments in an important matter; if I disregard the warning that death may come like a thief in the night; if I neglect to make an act of contrition; if I die an enemy of God, I shall be unhappy forever. Again, I say, terrible, but true. The world makes light of sin, the only misfortune it knows is that of being found out.

“My God, such is sin in Thy judgment. What is it in the judgment of the world? A very small evil or none at all. The world laughs at it and is indulgent to it, and as to its deserving eternal punishment it rises up indignant at the idea, and rather than admit it, would deny the God Who has said it does. The world thinks sin the same sort of imperfection as an impropriety or want of taste, or infirmity. Is God right or is the creature right? Is sin the greatest of all possible evils or the least? My Lord and Saviour, I have no hesitation which to believe. Thou art true and every man a liar. I will believe Thee above the whole world.” (Cardinal Newman)

Some seem to think that the Church has changed her attitude in regard to sin. She has changed her attitude, but only in re-

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gard to the sinner. The penances she imposes for sin today are less severe than they were in the first centuries. On the other hand, she is more generous with indulgences. Her attitude in regard to sin itself can never change. Her unchangeable teaching in regard to this important truth can not be better expressed than in the words of Cardinal Newman:

“The Church holds it better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one willful untruth or should steal one poor farthing without excuse.”

“Sin is a little thing,” I hear you say,
“It rises like a flame and dies away;
’Tis but a drop of nectar which man
sips”—
But see the Master’s body torn with
whips!

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Sin is a simple thing when once begun,—
An evil word, a thought, and it is done;
'Tis but a morning moonbeam, quickly
fled—
But look you at the Saviour's thorn-
crowned head!

Sin is an easy thing, the world will own,
It may be done in silence and alone;
Why should earth worry at such petty
loss—
Behold the Lord beneath His heavy
cross!

Sin is a passing thing, the rabble cries,
As quickly quenched as it is swift to rise;
But stand beneath the Hill of Calvary,
And see the God-Man dying on a tree!
(T. E. B.)

Third Essential:

A saint, I said, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to the Commandments. He is as grateful for their guidance as a traveler is for directions on a highway. To him they are God's directions for the right use of the great gift of free-will. To him the great freedom is the freedom to grow worthy of freedom by keeping the Laws of God. He appreciates the Commandments, he does not expose himself unnecessarily to temptation; and when he falls into sin, he has recourse to the means of forgiveness, he makes an act of contrition and receives the Sacrament of Penance.

A saint, in the next place, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to grace and the means of grace. There is much we can do without the special assistance of others; there is much we can do with the help of our fellowmen; and finally, there is much we can do only with the help of God. We can not, without the special assistance of God, which we call grace, lead a sinless, holy life.

Grace is a gift of God. It is a super-

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natural gift. It is a gift we lack since the Fall. God gives us His grace directly or indirectly, that is, through certain means. The principal means of grace are prayer and Holy Communion. We have will-power, but since the Fall it is not powerful enough to enable us to avoid evil and to do good at all times and under all conditions. Our will is weak in consequence of original sin and personal indulgence. We are inclined to evil and find it difficult to do what our conscience commands or advises us to do or to avoid; we are surrounded by temptations. Our better self loves what is good and detests what is evil, but in spite of ourselves, we should often fall without the grace of God. "The evil which I hate, that I do." We must, of course, use our will-power and not fall into the superstition of thinking that grace will do it all.

"This superstition," writes Father Faber, "consists in imagining that grace is to work like a charm, almost without the concurrence of our own wills. A man will not get up at the proper time in the morning. He says he can not, which is absurd, for there is no physical power holding him down in his bed. The fact is he will not,

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he does not choose to do it, the virtue of it or the obedience of it is not worth the pain of it. He pleads that over night he made a resolution to get up next morning, and asked the souls in purgatory to get him up. The morning comes; the air is cold; meditation is uninteresting, sleep is pleasant. No souls have come from purgatory to pull him out of bed, draw his curtains, light his fire, and the rest. It is not, therefore, his affair. He has done his part. He finished it all last night; but grace has not worked. What can he do? This is only a picture of a thousand other things. Multitudes who would have been nigh to saints remain nigh to sinners from this singular superstition about grace. What we want is not grace, it is will. We have already a thousand times more grace than we correspond to. God is never wanting on His side. It is the manly, persistent will which is wanting on ours."

If we cooperate with the grace of God, then we shall be able to exclaim with St. Paul: "I can do all in Him who strengthens me." "I" stands for will-power; "in Him" for the grace of God. I need not add that every action done in the state of grace, with the help of actual grace, and

with the right intention, is deserving of a supernatural and eternal reward. The best way of increasing our will-power and grace is to make use of both. "I say to you, that to everyone that hath shall be given and he shall abound." It is difficult to understand fully why God made grace dependent upon means, but we are not surprised. We have the same difficulty in the natural order. We have many difficulties, but no doubts. We do not know just why God made life and health and strength dependent on sleep and food and drink and other means, but we are convinced of the fact, and hence, we are making use of them and shall make use of them as long as we live. So we do not know why God made our spiritual life and health and strength dependent upon Sacraments and prayer, but we are convinced of the fact and make use of them, and shall make use of them in future. Speaking of Holy Communion, one means of grace which gives us not only grace, but the Author of grace, our Lord declared: "Except you shall eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you."

Many who are not members of the

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Church seem to think that they are free and we dependent, because we are obliged to use the means of grace, but they are mistaken. Non-Catholics are obliged to do just about what Catholics must do. Conscience is as exacting with them as it is with us. The difference is this: we have powerful means of grace to enable us to do the Will of God, while they lack many of these all-powerful aids. St. Paul did his part as though all depended upon himself, and at the same time, he acted as though all depended upon grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace in me hath not been void."

Sometimes 'tis called Genesareth, a lake
'tis said to be:

Sometimes 'tis called another name, the
sea of Galilee;

But whether lake or whether sea,
It seems a wonderous thing to me,
Because it once supported Thee,
As though it were a grassy lea,
As Thou, dear Lord, supportest me,
Lest I should fall.

(Virgil McGovern, O. F. M.)

Fourth Essential:

A saint, I said, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to grace and the means of grace. Grace does not remove difficulties, but it ends impossibilities. A saint is grateful for the means of grace, as a poor man who is the guest day after day at the table of a wealthy benefactor. To him the means of grace are the greatest of necessary blessings, not necessary annoyances.

A saint, in the fourth place, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to Holy Mass. Debts are a source of worry. If a man has contracted a debt which he can never hope to pay, he will be driven into bankruptcy. Imagine his joy if a friend, seeing his predicament, offers him a gift which will enable him to pay his debt in full. He would never be able to forget his benefactor, his friend in need. We owe God a debt we shall never be able to pay. The only tribute worthy of Him is an infinite one. How then are we going to adore Him, thank Him, ask for mercy, and ask Him for His blessings in a manner worthy of Him? If it depended on

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us to do so we should be driven to bankruptcy. To enable us to offer God the tribute we owe Him, a tribute worthy of Him in every respect, the Son of God became Man and ascended the Altar of Calvary to offer Himself to His Heavenly Father for us. He taught His Apostles on the eve of His death how to continue the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary in an unbloody manner to the end of time. Centuries have passed, and as the Prophet foretold, the unbloody Sacrifice of the New Law is perpetuating the Sacrifice of the Cross. "From the rising of the sun, even to the going down thereof" Holy Mass is being offered up somewhere in the world.

The Eucharistic Sacrifice, Holy Mass, fulfills all the ends of sacrifice. In it we offer to God the highest act of homage and worship, through Jesus Christ our Lord; the noblest, the greatest act of gratitude for all His benefits, through Jesus Christ our Lord; the most pathetic and efficacious plea for pardon of sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and the strongest and holiest appeal for graces and blessings, through Jesus Christ our

Lord. Without the Sacrifice of the Mass, what is religion? It is a city without water, a desert without an oasis, a world without a sun, a body without a soul; without sacrifice, religion is as lifeless as a corpse.

When we realize for the first time what Holy Mass really is, when we learn that it is the means Jesus Christ has bequeathed to us to enable us to pay God what we owe Him, when we are told that we are welcome to attend Holy Mass daily, when we discover that we may attend in spirit the few hundred thousand Holy Masses offered up every day, our joy knows no bounds. We feel like a pauper, like a man in despair, because of his indebtedness, who is told that he has become an heir to millions. Holy Mass costs us nothing, but it cost Christ a great deal. It requires a little effort on our part to attend Holy Mass with the proper dispositions; it requires a little effort to be present in spirit at all the masses being offered up in the world every hour of the day, but it is an effort the saints never failed to make. No wonder Cardinal Newman exclaimed, when he discovered

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Holy Mass: "To me nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass as it is said among us. I could attend Masses forever and not be tired."

"When the last Mass upon earth shall have been offered," writes Father Vaughn, "the sun will already have ceased to give its light, and the race redeemed by the Precious Blood of the Son of God will already have flowed into the ocean of eternity. The last great act upon earth will be the Mass." Without Holy Mass we are infinitely poor, with Holy Mass we are infinitely rich. We go to the Altar with empty hands, we come away with our debt canceled by a miracle.

A bit of bread,
Five short words said;
At the priest's nod
The host is—God!

(Charles J. Quirk, S. J.)

II

FRANCIS

If, to be a saint, it is necessary to take the right attitude in regard to the four essentials I have just mentioned, then St. Francis was indeed a saint.

Attitude in Regard to Our Holy Faith

To Francis "faith was the evidence of things that appear not." The test of faith is indifference to the world's ridicule. Francis stood this test at the beginning of his conversion: "But when the town-folk beheld him unkempt in appearance, and changed in mind, and on this account deemed him to have lost his senses, they rushed upon him with mud of the streets and stones, and mocked him with loud shouts as a fool and madman. But the servant of the Lord, not moved or overborne by any insults, passed through all as one deaf unto them. When his father heard these outcries, he ran out at once, not to deliver him, but rather to destroy him; laying aside all compunction, he dragged him into the house, and there afflicted him first with words, then with

stripes and bonds. But Francis was thereby rendered but the more eager and valiant to carry out that which he had begun, remembering that saying of the Gospel: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' " (St. Bonaventure)

Attitude in Regard to the Commandments

Francis appreciated the Commandments. Even before his break with the world he led a sinless life. "For albeit in his youth he was reared in vanity amid the vain sons of men, and, after gaining some knowledge of letters, was appointed unto a profitable business of merchandise; nevertheless, by the aid of the Divine protection, he went not astray among the wanton youths after the lusts of the flesh, albeit given up unto pleasures; nor among the covetous merchants, albeit intent on his gains, did he put his trust in money and treasure." (St. Bonaventure)

Attitude in Regard to Grace and the Means of Grace

Francis realized what should happen to

him without the grace of God. "If ever God should take away," he declared, "the treasures of His grace that He has lent me now, what else would be left to me but the body and the soul which are common to believers and unbelievers alike?" (Opusc. 322; 2 Cel. 133). One of the many passages taken from the life of St. Francis by St. Bonaventure is sufficient to give us an idea of our Saint's attitude in regard to the means of grace: "Toward the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he felt a glowing devotion that consumed the very marrow of his bones, marveling with utmost amazement at that most loving condescension and condescending love. Oft did he communicate, and so devoutly as to render others devout, while, as he tasted of the sweetness of that Lamb without spot he became like one inebriated in spirit and rapt out of himself in ecstasy."

Attitude in Regard to the Holy Mass

Francis was grateful, above all, for Holy Mass. "I beseech you," he wrote, "to show the greatest reverence and hon-

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our to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom all things on earth and in heaven have been restored to peace and reconciled to the Almighty Father."

III

THE INTERIOR LIFE

1. Two Essentials
2. Francis
3. Five Proofs
4. Francis

III

THE INTERIOR LIFE

A saint, I said, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to the Creed, in regard to the Commandments, in regard to grace and the means of grace, in regard to Holy Mass; in a word, in regard to the essentials of External Religion.

A saint, furthermore, and above all, is one who takes the right attitude in regard to the Interior Life. "This is the Will of God, your sanctification." Without internal religion, or the interior life, external religion is meaningless. With it, it is full of meaning—as important as the body is to the soul. There are those who tell us that they want to hear nothing about religion. They tell us they had their fill in their childhood. Such persons never heard of the interior life; they were taught the externals only, and these were not presented to them in a way which made them attractive, irresistible. We can not have too much religion of the genuine kind, just as we can not have too much health.

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What, then, is the essence of the interior life? It is union with Christ by love. "Religion is no impersonal affair, it is no commercial transaction across a Sunday counter. It is more than a church-going duty, more than a knee-drill on a spiritual parade ground. It is chiefly, if not solely, the appropriation of Christ." (Father B. Vaughn, S.J.) "I am the Vine, you the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him the same beareth much fruit."

In order to lead an interior life, two essentials are required which are almost too evident to mention and explain.

First Essential:

In order to lead a life of union with Christ by love, we must first find Him.

We are apt to take it for granted that we have found Christ. It may be, however, that we have found out all about Him, but that we have not really found Him. How can we find Christ? We must blot out the centuries which have elapsed since He lived in Palestine. He is not like an historical personage Who lived in the long ago, died, and will remain dead

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to the end of time. He is as much alive today as He was then. He arose from the dead, He is present in our hearts, He is present in the Blessed Sacrament, He is at the right hand of God the Father in heaven.

We speak of Christ as the Redeemer of the world, as the Saviour of mankind. We may use these titles when speaking of Him, but if we wish to lead an interior life we must speak of Him as: my Redeemer, my Saviour, my Friend; or, if we have become brides of Christ, we must call Him the Bridegroom of my soul.

If a man saves my life at the certain loss of his own, I would speak of him as my benefactor, even if he had saved several others by his heroic sacrifice. Christ saved me at the certain loss of His own life. He could not have done more for me by dying for me alone than by dying for the world; hence, I must speak of Him as my Benefactor, my Friend. "He loved me," St. Paul exclaims, "and delivered Himself for me."

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"Tell me no more that Jesus never died
As I have long believed, upon a tree.
And tell me not that Jesus Crucified
Is but the outworn relic of a creed.
Keep your poor lies, for always at my
side
Burns the bright image of Him glorified."

(Marjorie Holmes)

Second Essential:

In order to lead a life of union with Christ, the first essential is to find Him.

The second essential is to love Him. By loving Him I do not mean to make occasional acts of love. I mean to love Him always, every moment of our lives. We must love Christ, not merely with natural, but also with supernatural love. This gift of supernatural love is infused into the soul with sanctifying grace. We must love Christ for His own sake; He is true God. If we love His finite gifts, surely we can not help loving the infinitely loving Giver. He is perfect Man. If this is true, how can we help loving such a Man. We must love Him because of

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the proofs of love He has given us. He became Man for us, He died for us, He is our Food, He will be our joy forever. Anyone who treats us as Christ did, loves us with genuine, unselfish love, and deserves the same kind of love in return. One of the best means of stimulating love is a Crucifix. No man can gaze at the Image of Christ Crucified without uttering the prayer: "If I forget Thee let my right hand be forgotten, let my tongue cleave to my jaw if I do not remember Thee." (Psalm 136.)

We must not complain because we can not see our Lord. It would be easy to love and serve Him if we did. In heaven it will be impossible not to love our Lord. At present we are having our one and only opportunity of loving Him and serving Him without seeing Him. Our Lord commands us to love Him with our whole heart. Many are afraid that they shall never be able to comply with this first and greatest of Commandments. They seem to think it means that they may not love His gifts—persons, places, things. Christ means that we must love Him, and Him only, with our whole heart, as the Giver.



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We may love His gifts, but only as gifts.

Our Lord realized that we should miss His presence in human form. He knew that we should be happy if we could see Him only once to offer Him our pledge of love and to do Him some service. He, therefore, made provision for this desire to reach him personally by giving us the assurance that He would accept all done for our neighbor for love of Him as done to Himself. "What you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done to Me." The thought that we may reach our Lord at any time through our fellow-men is the most effective motive to induce us to be generous with others in thought, word, and deed, and to avoid all faults against charity. "Faults against charity are a serious matter," writes Father Considine, S. J. "Strong resolutions are not a remedy. The remedy is to get more love of our Lord."

"The human heart," St. Augustine declared, "is restless till it rests in the Giver of all good gifts"—in Christ. The restlessness of those who have not found Him occasionally breaks out in strange ways:

"There has never been a parallel to the scenes staged, especially by women, about the hospital for six days and nights, following the fatal operation on Valentino, the movie star. The streets were packed for blocks in every direction. When the word came that Valentino was dead, thousands burst into tears and hundreds fainted. Many wept aloud as if they had lost their only friend on earth, oblivious of the fact that their existence was unknown to Valentino. When his body was placed in a coffin at an undertaker's establishment the mob fought to get a glimpse of the dead shiek's face. After more than one hundred thousand had filed past his bier, the authorities were compelled, because of rioting, to close the doors and stop the procession. His worshippers staged a demonstration at Chicago, and at every place his funeral train stopped en route to Hollywood, where the biggest demonstration of all took place."

What was Valentino in himself? What had he done for those people? What were they really looking for? Every one in those vast throngs was looking for Christ and did not know it. It would

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have been the psychological moment for those hungry souls to discover the true Lover, Jesus Christ. Even if Valentino had recovered; even if with his restoration to life it had been possible to give to his admirers all that the world contains, they would not have been at rest. The whole world without Christ leaves the heart empty. Christ, without anything the world contains, fills the heart to the brim. We must first put Christ, the Giver, into our hearts, and then we may turn to His gifts and use them according to the laws He has laid down for the right use of the good things He has given us. Only in this way shall we enjoy both the Giver and His gifts.

When young men and women rise to fame and fortune, everyone whispers: "Let us hope that it will not be their ruin." It is considered almost self-evident that as soon as God bestows His gifts upon us, we forthwith forget Him and use them to offend Him, and to ruin our souls or bodies or both, and those of others for time and eternity. "I have loved Thee too late," says St. Augustine, "O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new, I have loved Thee too late. But what!

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Thou wert within me, and I was without myself, and it was without that I sought Thee, and I pursued with my deformity the beauty of Thy creatures." Sometimes God, in His mercy, deprives us of someone or of something to which we are inordinately attached in order to bring us back into His everlasting arms of love. The world will be an exile, filled with unspeakably lonely men and women, in spite of the wonderful persons and things it contains, unless we seek and find repose in Christ, and love and use His gifts to bring us closer to Him, the Giver.

We must bring Christ into the lives of children at the very dawn of reason. They must not become boy or girl or toy struck, but Christ struck! The first name that ought to fall from the lips of a child is Jesus; and the first gift, after the child has attained the use of reason, the Crucifix. We must make them realize that Christ alone is the One Who can satisfy the human heart; we must train them to use the gifts of God rightly, then when they grow older they will be properly prepared to use them, especially the world's

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greatest gifts — human beings, rightly; and some of them, some of the most gifted ones, will gladly give up all right to possess things, by the vow of poverty; the right to a home and all it implies, by the vow of chastity; their own will, by the vow of obedience. They will be so happy in the possession of Christ, the Giver, that they shall be glad to forego the possession of His wonderful gifts in order to enjoy the Giver with undivided attention and an undivided heart, and in order to devote their lives to His service and the service of their fellowmen.

When two persons meet who have practically, and not only theoretically, accepted the ideal attitude in regard to Christ, the Giver, and in regard to His gifts, especially in regard to persons, they feel drawn to each other and eventually become friends. Such a friendship is safe as long as Christ remains the bond of union. It is the greatest gift that heaven can bestow on man, next to friendship with Christ. Such a union begins with Christ, leads to Christ and ends with Christ. A friendship which eliminates Christ, begins

with the creature, continues with the creature and ends with the creature, is only a so-called friendship. A selfish union always ends in either a break or disaster.

They say that modern civilization is on the decline and that the nations of the East are awakening from their slumber. If this is true, then there is only one way of saving modern civilization, and that is to teach men to find Christ and love Him alone with their whole heart for His own sake, and all that He has created as means to know, love, and serve Him better. We must make them realize the importance of the two great Commandments of love which include all others. And if we want to subdue the East and its mighty peoples, it can not be done on the battlefield or at sea or in the air. It can be done only by making them members of the mystical body of Christ, by meeting them under the standard of the Cross, or at the foot of the Altar as sons of God and heirs of heaven. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together and a little child shall lead them."

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Christ placed us in the midst of four kingdoms: the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the kingdom of man. We may love and enjoy all the good things which these four worlds contain. All that our Lord asks is that we do not forget Him, the Giver; and that we use His gifts to bring us closer to Him. Religion does not mean privation for its own sake, it means training ourselves to love Christ, and to love and enjoy rightly all that He has made. To love God's gifts with well-ordered love is to love the Giver indirectly. That is what St. Bonaventure meant by the words: "If your love for anything does not conduce to greater love for God you do not yet love Him with your whole heart."

Christ commanded us to love Him, not to feel love for Him. If we desire to love Him, if we make acts of love, if we give Him the proofs of love, then we shall love Him indeed, and He will love us in return and "take up His abode in our souls." "If any man loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

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Not to be loved—nay, but to love,
I ask, O Lord!
Pierce Thou my heart with love as with
A shining sword
Plunged deep into this heart—plunged to
The jeweled hilt,
Nor do Thou draw it forth until
My life it spilt!

Not that I may feel Thy love,
O Lord, for me,
But that I may prove unto death
My love for Thee.
Not that I may Thy sweetness know,
Nay, but to give, O Lord, I ask—
Not to possess!

(Mary Dixon Thayer)

2

FRANCIS

Love of Christ

Francis found Christ. He loved Him, the God-Man, with the burning love of a seraph. He is called the Seraphic Saint of Assisi. "With such glowing love was he moved toward Christ, yea, and with

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such intimate love did his Beloved repay his, that it seemed unto the servant of God himself that he felt his Saviour almost continually present before his eyes, even as he once revealed Himself unto his companions in intimate converse." (St. Bonaventure)

Love of Creatures

Francis loved God's rarest gifts, his fellowmen, with a love which brought both himself and them closer to happiness and to Christ. As Father Ross, C. S. P., puts it: "Francis loved every man with a pure, clean, life-giving affection. There were no evil consequences to that love, founded on communion with God. It did not leave behind a trail of broken hearts, discarded mistresses, bastard children. Francis loved, but he loved unselfishly, with the disciplined heart of an ascetic. He loved, not to use the objects of his love for a few moments of selfish gratification, but in order to bring them nearer to God."

Francis is known the world over as the most ideal lover of nature. He used everything he saw as a stepping-stone to

his Maker. "For what remaineth," he once declared, "when the soul is without spiritual delights, but for the flesh to turn to its own delights?"

3

FIVE PROOFS

After we have really found Christ and really love Him, we must give Him five proofs of love. We must allow nothing to sever or weaken or disturb the union between Him and our souls. We must make a success of life's secondary, and above all, of life's main work. If we give Him these five proofs of love, our interior life will be perfect, we shall be one with Christ, and Christ will be one with us; we shall be able to say with St. Paul: "Not I, but Christ liveth in me."

First Proof:

If we want to lead a life of union with Christ by love, we must give Him the first proof of love. The first proof is to allow nothing to sever the union between Him and our souls. This union is severed by

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mortal sin. We must avoid grievous sin, because of the nature of sin and its consequences; but, if we want to lead an interior life, we must avoid it from motives of love. This is a test of love which may tax our loyalty to the limit. We are weak, we are inclined to evil, and occasionally we may be severely tempted. Christ expects us to prove our love by never committing a mortal sin, whether it be a sin of malice or a sin of weakness. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of the whole law." Just as a small leak is sufficient to allow all the water to run out of a vessel, so one mortal sin proves that we have forgotten the Giver, and are using his gifts to offend Him grievously.

When tempted to fall into mortal sin, we must see our Lord standing before us asking: "Lovest thou Me?" And when we answer: "Certainly we love You with our whole heart," we must hear Him say: "I appreciate your assurance of love, but the moment has come to prove your love." If we overcome the temptation, if we refuse to commit mortal sin, our Lord is pleased, because we have given Him the

proof of love He requested. "He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." St. Paul calls sin "a crucifying Christ anew." It does not actually crucify Him, but it did crucify Him once, and would crucify Him anew if He were mortal still and sin were allowed to take its course. As far as we are concerned, mortal sin is crucifying Christ again. When tempted to mortal sin we must, therefore, say to ourselves: "Just as I would not murder a friend for a moment's gratification, so I will not crucify my divine and human Friend, Jesus Christ, by yielding to this temptation. We must exclaim with St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? But in all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If we have fal-

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len into mortal sin, we must at once be sorry from motives of love.

On one occasion René Bazin happened to stroll into a church when the Abbé was instructing children. He had just finished the story of Judas and was asking questions. He asked the children what they should have done had they been in Judas' place. One lad gave an answer the novelist could never forget. "I would have hanged myself," he said, but added, "around the neck of the good Jesus." If we have begun to lead an interior life and fall into mortal sin, we must hang ourselves, but around the neck of the good Jesus; we must be sorry from motives of love.

Second Proof:

After we have found Christ and begun to love Him, after we have begun to lead a life of union with Him by love, it is not sufficient to avoid mortal sin, we must also avoid venial sin. We must not allow anything to sever the union between Christ and our souls, but we must go a step further and allow nothing to weaken it. The union between Christ and our souls is

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weakened by the violation of the laws of God in less important matters. We must avoid habitual venial sins, and others we fall into occasionally, not so much because of the nature of sin and its consequences, but, above all, from motives of love. Just as we do not offend a human friend, so we must not offend Christ, our Divine Friend, by venial sin, because it is the second proof of love He expects of us. The text mentioned above applies not only to mortal sin, but also to venial sin: "He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Third Proof:

Let nothing disturb thee,
Nothing affright thee;
All things are passing;
God never changeth;
Patient endurance
Attaineth to all things;
Who God possesseth
In nothing is wanting:
Alone God sufficeth.

(St. Teresa's Book-mark)

In order to lead an interior life, we must not allow anything to sever or weak-

en the union between Christ and our souls, as we just have said, but these two proofs are only a preparation for the third proof of love. The third proof of love is to allow nothing to even disturb the union between Christ and our souls; in other words, Christ expects us to be happy always. But how can we be happy all the time in the midst of the countless trying conditions of life? If I have a thriving business and suffer a small loss, I do not mind, practically it does not disturb me. We have Christ in our hearts, and hence we must not allow trials to affect us unduly. "Undisturbed in the midst of the countless disturbances of every-day life," that must be our motto.

To possess Christ is happiness. Happiness, thank God, does not depend upon conditions. If it did, how many would be happy? How many are living under ideal conditions, how many have all they should like to have? The possession or privation of good things makes life more or less agreeable, but they are not necessary for happiness. The essence of happiness is the possession of Christ, and no one can deprive us of this infinite treasure. The

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foundation of our happiness must be the One Who can not change: "Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and the same forever." Those who foolishly build on what is passing will suffer one severe blow after another, the loss of parents, of friends, of money, or the loss of one of the countless other gifts of God will be a shock to them from which they may never recover.

Some will find the burden of life unbearable, and end it all, as they say, by suicide. A little child in one of our hospitals was wasting away with tuberculosis of the bones. Her mother was constantly at her bedside. The child's last words every evening, before kissing her mother goodnight, were: "Mother, please kill me." Her sufferings were intense. The mother told her friends that if the child died, she would end it all by turning on the gas. What was that mother's mistake? She forgot that the child belonged to God and was merely entrusted to her. Her life was resting on a frail, mortal foundation, instead of on the living, Eternal One, Jesus Christ. We shall always feel the loss of God's gifts, but we must not forget that the only real disturbance in life is the loss of Jesus

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Christ, and that that loss depends upon us. A great man who was always happy, regardless of what happened, declared: "I am always happy within, because there is no one who can rob my heart of Jesus Christ."

If we want to give Christ the third great proof of love, we ought to say to Him Who lives in us; or we ought to come before an Altar where He is really present as God and Man and pray; or we ought to turn our thoughts to Him in heaven and exclaim: "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth; for Thee my flesh and my heart have fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever." We must reach the stage when we can truly say: "I have but to close my eyes and I see All; I have but to be alone and I possess All without disturbance."

If He be there within my heart
We form a little world apart—
Just He and I.

I rest in Him,
And in His light all else grows dim
That once was beautiful.

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No art
Can charm with Christ within.
When burning pain its arrows dart,
Or fevered hour my pulses start,
It is not then as it had been,
If He be there!

My quivering soul may feel the smart
Of thoughtless world, and my lone heart
Droop weakly; but God's strength I win
To nerve myself, and I begin
To play in life the valiant part
Of one upraised by sacred power.
Oh, precious living is the hour
If He be there!

(Anonymous)

Fourth Proof:

We must avoid sin, grievous and venial; we must be sorry for the sins we have committed, we must do so from motives of love. Next, we must seek happiness in the conscious possession and companionship of Jesus Christ. Then we shall be ready to give our Lord the fourth proof of love. What is it? It is to make a success of life's secondary work. Christ had a work to do on earth. He did it. "He was obedient unto death, even unto the death of

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the Cross." If we want to lead a life of union with Christ, we too must make a success of life's secondary work, we must do the work God has mapped out for us from all eternity.

The biography of each one of us existed in the mind of God from all eternity. It depends upon us to make our actual lives a duplicate of His edition. If we want to succeed in life, we must make good use of the time of preparation. We must prepare ourselves spiritually, intellectually, physically. We must not use the first years of our lives dreaming of ourselves and our future. "For my part," writes Aline Kilmer, "I had rather find an adder in my bed than a hope in my heart." We must think of Christ and prepare ourselves to do the work He has in store for us. "I will study," Lincoln said, "and maybe a chance will come." If we do not use the time to prepare for the future, we shall not be ready when the call comes to begin our public career. We long for the limelight, we dream of the first places, but we do not want to take the steps that lead up to success, we want to reap without sowing. Everything seems interesting and easy save the work of preparation; that

alone seems dull and hard. If we do settle down to the grind of a life of obscurity and hard work, we shall, in time, begin to love and enjoy it. It will be hard for us when the call comes to exchange the hidden life for a public career. "Doing is the great thing," Ruskin said, "for if resolutely people do what is right, in time they come to like doing it."

Lindbergh, twenty-five year old air-mail pilot, made his famous thirty-three and one-half hours non-stop flight from New York to Paris. The opportunity came and he was ready. Some of his qualities noted by the army officers who examined him for promotion, as shown by reports in the files of the Militia Bureau of the War Department, are as follows: "Intelligent," "Industrious," "Energetic," "Dependable," "Purposeful," "Alert," "Quick of action," "Serious," "Deliberate," "Stable," "Efficient," "Frank," "Modest," "Congenial," "A man of good moral habits and regular in all his business transactions." One of the officers expressed the belief that the young man "would complete everything he undertook." That was the remote preparation. He did not forget the immediate preparation.

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For more than a week before his flight reporters pleaded with him to permit the publication of his plans for his epochal hop. "Wait until I have done something," he said, forgetting that his four-time membership in the famous Caterpillar Club, during which he escaped death four times by thrilling parachute jumps, was worth more than casual mention. Those who observed his actions reported: "During the two months that the monoplane was under construction at the Ryan plant, Lindbergh took long walks, and remained awake from thirty to forty hours at a stretch. One week before he hopped off from Rockwell Field on his now memorable flight, he remained awake forty-nine hours. He was in superb physical condition, and those who were close to him during his stay here felt confident he had a good chance to get to Paris."

Lindbergh's backers have stated that the cost of his venture, including the cost of the plane was twenty thousand dollars. When the young flyer first undertook to interest them in the project, he offered his savings, amounting to two thousand dollars. They called him the "Flying Fool," but he flew only after due preparation, and

only then did he succeed and reap the reward.

The world's real work has been done by those who were ready when the opportunity came, and who had the courage to do it. Thousands of others had the capacity to do it just as well or better, but they were not ready. "He who puts his best into every task that comes to him will surely outstrip the man who waits for a great opportunity before he condescends to exert himself." (J. Chamberlain). It is pitiful to see men on the threshold of life unfit for the task that awaits them. If they failed to use the time given them to equip themselves for life's secondary work, will they make up for it in the midst of their exacting duties? "For God's sake, take your time," writes Father Louismet, O.S.B., "allow yourself time to grow and ripen. You will get there if it pleases the Lord. Make yourself first worthy of the dignity, and when you have done this, ten to one, you will not care a jot whether you get it or not. Your soul will be too noble to grieve at not getting this bauble, or at seeing others perhaps less worthy getting it in your place." If a man is lead-

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ing an interior life, if he has sufficient talent, if he has prepared himself conscientiously for life's work, he will make a success of the tasks assigned to him and God will bless his efforts. There will be no need of resorting to means and ways of drawing attention to his work. His work will speak for itself. He will not be able to hide himself. He will not have to run after people; the world will run after him. "Responsibilities gravitate to the person who can shoulder them. Power flows to the man who knows how."

The right attitude in regard to life's secondary work is contained in three words: Who—What—Why.

Who:

Who is the One to Whom the task has been assigned to shape our lives? The Holy Spirit. If we do our part to become fit instruments, He will see to it that we shall always be in that place and doing that work which He has set aside for us from all eternity.

What:

What must we do? We must do what those who represent the Holy Spirit tell us to do. We must obey those who have

authority over us. We must obey the voice of conscience. We must not shirk our work, however difficult, however distasteful it may happen to be.

Why:

Why must we do our work? We must do it to make a success of life's secondary work, as Christ did, and for the right intention; we must do it to please our Lord and for eternal wages. Many other legitimate secondary motives will present themselves before or during our actions, but we must not allow them to weaken the two principal motives just mentioned.

We know what it means to work on a commission basis. Our Lord wants us to enter His service. He pays one hundred per cent commission. If we live and work to please Him He accepts all we do, He is pleased, and we receive the reward. He will bless us in this life and will share His own bliss with us in heaven. We can not do a thing for love of Jesus without doing it all for ourselves.

"Ask for nothing and refuse nothing," is the principle which St. Francis de Sales suggests to guide us in our work. He does not mean that we may never ask or re-

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fuse to do a certain task. We may assert ourselves, but never for selfish reasons. He means that we must not do our will, but the will of God. We find the same attitude in the three words: Who, What, Why. We are reminded of: Who is behind our work; What to do; and lastly, Why we should do it. All to make a success of life's secondary work. All for Jesus, all for our eternal welfare, and all through Mary—that must be our prayer.*

If we make a complete success of life's secondary work, we shall thereby give our Lord the fourth proof of love; we shall be like Him Who made a complete success of His career. There will be a fourth bond of union between us.

Fifth Proof:

Christ loved us and proved His love for us. He expects us to find Him, to love Him, and to prove our love for Him. I have mentioned four proofs of love. We now come to the fifth and last and most important proof of love.

The fifth proof of love is to make a

* "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin," by Grignon De Montfort, translated by Father Faber. Extract of the book published by Benedictine Sisters, Clyde, Mo.

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success of life's main work—to become saints. St. Thomas says: "The essential perfection of a thing consists in its answering perfectly the end for which it was made."

Christ is the Vine and we are the branches. He is a perfect Vine, the Holy One, and if we are to be perfect branches of the Vine, fit for perfect union with Him, we, too, must be perfect, holy.

God the Father created us, God the Son redeemed us. After Christ had finished His work, He ascended into heaven. Before He left this world, however, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. The Holy Spirit came upon the Church. He enters the soul of every man who is in the state of sanctifying grace. It is the work of the Sanctifier to transform us into saints, so that we shall be fit for union with Christ in us, with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, with Christ Who is waiting for us in heaven. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, life is the process of sanctification, and if we take the right attitude in regard to this process, in other words, if we cooperate whole-heartedly with the Holy Spirit, we shall become per-

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fect branches of Christ the Vine—saints. The right attitude in regard to the process of spiritual transformation—life—is contained in three words: Thank—Use—Rejoice.

Thank:

The first word is “thank.” If it is true that life is the inevitable process required to purify and sanctify us and make us fit for union with Christ, then, if we wish to be logical, it is not sufficient to be merely resigned. If some one gives us a check with which to make a good investment, we do not stop to make an act of resignation, we thank him without a moment’s hesitation. We ought to say thanks always. We must understand this word correctly, however. If someone insults us, for example, we do not have to thank the person for the insult, nor enjoy it for its own sake, but we must thank the Holy Spirit, Who permits it, for the opportunity it contains.

We are inclined to pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony, and sloth. It requires opportunities to make us realize that they are in us, and how strong they are. It requires opportunities to root out

what is not Christlike, and to develop every virtue, until we have reached "the age of the fullness of Christ," until we are fit for union with Christ, until not we, but Christ lives and reigns in us.

If someone insults us, we are apt to be taken up with the two elements that are worthless—with the person and the insult—and, on the other hand, we are apt to overlook the two elements that alone deserve our attention: the One Who permitted it, the Sanctifier, and the opportunity it contains. "God can not be the Author of evil," the so-called Christian Scientist says. We agree with him. But he adds: "Therefore evil does not exist." Here we disagree. We do not deny the existence of evil. We claim that man, by abusing his free-will, caused all the evil in the world; at the same time we claim that everything that happens is a blessing, either an evident blessing or a blessing in disguise. We extract what is worthless from what happens, and only the helpful part remains. We turn the one who insults us, for example, over to God; we ignore the insult. We retain only the vision of the Sanctifier behind the process

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of life and of every opportunity it offers us. It is true to say, therefore, that everything that happens is a blessing as far as our interior life, our spiritual development, is concerned.

Our philosophy of life rests upon a solid foundation, it does not rest upon false assumptions or mere auto-suggestion. We say with Holy Scripture: "To those that love God all things work together unto good." We never exclaim: "What have I done to deserve this?" We accept trials as penance, but above all, as a means of sanctification. We say "thanks" with the same sincerity and enthusiasm, whether happenings are pleasant or unpleasant, because trials and blessings are equally helpful as far as the spiritual life is concerned.

"What we now suffer God has from eternity foreseen, and has ordained that we should suffer in this way, and not in any other way. Would He allow the least adversity to fall upon His children, or to come to them, or the least breath of wind to blow upon them, that He saw was inexpedient for their salvation? Heat and cold, hunger and thirst, infirmities and afflictions, all these and each of them,

whenever they befall the servants of God, come not only to purify, but to adorn their souls." (Blosius, *Institutio Spiritualis*, c. 8, sect.)

Fiddlemee, the fool, says to Sir Aleric, in the "Anchorhold" by Enid Dinnis: " 'Yea or nay—'tis the same thing.'

"Sir Aleric laughed. 'Ask a lover,' quoth he, 'whether yea or nay mean the same thing when he awaits his lady's answer. Come now, Sir Fool, I will give thee a silver talent if thou wilt prove to me that yea or nay be the same thing to him in such a case.'

"Fiddlemee regarded the speaker critically. 'Thou art a good Christian Knight?' he said interrogatively. 'Thou wilt stand by thy bargain?'

" 'So I will, good Christian knight that I am,' Sir Aleric replied. 'So now, Fiddlemee, answer me my riddle and earn thy talent.'

" 'And that I will, right readily,' Fiddlemee answered. 'Doth the lady answer, yes—'tis the will of God. Doth the lady answer, no—'tis likewise the will of God, Sir Christian. So doth both yes and no mean one and the same thing. Two songs, that is, the one that I sing merrily on my

blue knee, the other sedately on my red knee, but for all that is the same song—a song of the will of God.’

“His bright eyes twinkled at the knight as he held out his hand for the talent.

“‘Thou rogue!’ Sir Aleric cried. ‘Thou hast wit enough, though it may be misplaced in thy head. Take thy talent, thou has slain me with my own rapier.’

“‘Yes,’ the jongleur replied, ‘and it hath been done right cleverly, for thou hast been pierced by the hilt and not the blade.’ He pointed to the cross hilt of the other’s sword.”

If we obtain a blessing, we turn to Christ and say: “The Sanctifier has given me a valuable opportunity. I am not going to use this blessing to forget You or to offend You. I am going to remember You and use it to serve You better than ever.” If a trial comes to us, we turn to Christ and say: “The Sanctifier has given me an opportunity. I am going to use it to prove that I want You, the Giver. You are infinitely dear to me whether You give or withhold Your gifts.” This is the liberty of the children of God, “the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.”

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A saint refuses to commit mortal or venial sin; he allows nothing to disturb his peace and joy of heart; he makes a success of life's secondary work; he is grateful for the opportunity every moment contains. It is this condition which makes the devil furious at the saints. All that the evil spirit can do with such a man is to annoy him, but only as far as God permits. But even this does not disturb him. He smiles and says: "He can not ruin me, so he is trying to annoy me, but in vain." There are those who love Christ, but fear they shall never become saints. The reason is that they can not be grateful for trials in themselves, or that they can not feel grateful. They are very happy when they discover that it is not necessary to feel grateful, but to be grateful; not necessary to thank for the trial, but for the opportunity it contains. "In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you all."

The roar of the world is in my ears,
Thank God for the roar of the world.
Thank God for the mighty tide of fears
Against me always hurled.

Thank God for the bitter and ceaseless
strife,

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And the sting of His chastening rod,
Thank God for the stress and the pain
of life,
And oh, thank God for God!
(Joyce Kilmer)

Use:

The second of the three words which contain the ideal attitude in regard to the process—life—the word Use, is the most important.

It is important to be grateful for an opportunity to make a good investment, but it is most important to make good use of it. In like manner, it is important to thank for opportunities to purify and sanctify our souls, but it is most important to use them. By using the millions of opportunities of a lifetime, I mean to allow them to have the effect on us for which they were sent or permitted. The Holy Spirit does not want our fellowmen to be unjust or unkind to us, but, if they are, He does want us to use the opportunity. It is not necessary to know just why everything happens, it is sufficient to know that there is no such thing as chance; that every happening in our lives is part of a marvelous process of spiritual transformation.

When we speak of using every opportunity, many exclaim: "Oh, it requires a saint to do that." It does, but it requires the fortitude of a saint, and more, to stand the reaction of lost opportunities. "We go to hell," Thomas More declared, "with far more pains than we might go to heaven with." It is a moment's satisfaction to yield to lower-self, but it is followed by never-ending regrets; on the other hand, it is a moment's agony to crucify self, but it is followed by never-ending joy. For time and for eternity we shall never be able to forget the lost opportunities of our lives.

Remember three things come not back:
 The arrow sent upon its track,
 It will not swerve, it will not stay,
 It speeds, it flies, to wound or slay.
 The spoken word, so soon forgot
 By thee, but it has perished not,
 In other hearts 'tis living still,
 And doing work for good or ill.

And the lost opportunity
 That cometh back no more to thee,
 In vain thou weapest, in vain dost yearn,
 These three will never more return."

(Anonymous)

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It is the work of the Holy Spirit to direct the process of sanctification, ours to be on the alert and to cooperate with Him. Even if we are to blame for what happened, we must learn the lesson it teaches us and use it. To brood over mistakes is a waste of time. In a sense, small opportunities are as difficult to accept rightly as great ones, because the same principles are involved. It requires the same act of faith in the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, it requires the same kind of self-crucifixion. There is a difference, but only in degree. No opportunity can be called small. Why? Because of its consequences. "The slightest movement affects all nature, the whole sea changes because of a rock. Thus is grace—the most trifling action has effect on everything by its consequences; therefore everything is important." (Pascal)

Many say they want to be happy, but they do not mean it. They want to be unhappy, rather than pay the price for happiness. Only when they welcome and use opportunities do they really want happiness.

We have a lifetime in which to permit

the Holy Spirit to complete His work of sanctification in us, and since life at its best is short, we can not afford to trifle. If we use every opportunity as it is offered, or if we make amends for those we have wasted, we shall be normal, perfect branches of Christ, the Vine, fit for union with Him at the hour of our death. Death is a penalty for sin; death is a violent separation of two lifelong friends; death is a thief that steals us and not what we have accumulated. It is for these reasons that death is a trial. But these are not the real reasons which cause man to dread death. The real reason is contained in the exclamation: "I had not feared thee, but to yield my breath, life's purpose unfulfilled, that is thy sting, O death!" Not death, but a life of wasted opportunities and neglect to do penance, makes death terrible.

A friend of President Lincoln had just written a scorching letter to a political opponent who had wronged him. He asked the President if he might read it to him. The President smiled and nodded. After he had finished reading the letter he reached for the envelope, when Lincoln

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interrupted him and asked what he was going to do with it. "Mail it, of course," he said. "Oh, that's a good letter to get out of your system," replied Lincoln, "but not the kind of letter to mail." It is a relief to get something out of one's system, but there is only one way of getting genuine relief, of coming out of every hour of life happier, and that way is to use the opportunities which the happenings of every-day life contain.

The only motive powerful enough to induce us to thank for opportunities, and to use them, is love for Christ. If we love Christ we shall not rest until we have given Him the best and greatest proof of love, until we are doing our very best, with His grace, to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His work of transforming us, by means of the process—life—into saints.

Rejoice:

The ideal attitude in regard to life's main work, our sanctification, is contained in the two words just mentioned: Thank—Use. These two words would be incomplete, however, without the third. The third word is: Rejoice. This word con-

tains the reaction that takes place after we have thanked for and used opportunities.

Many seem to think that the interior life is mainly a life of repression, of self-denial, of self-crucifixion. But they are mistaken. They would not cling to the deceptive satisfaction of a selfish life if they dreamt that every time we thank and use, a joy awaits us unlike any other merely human joy, however great. They realize that it would be unbearable to crucify self always, to compel lower-self to use joys and trials rightly, without some satisfaction even in this world, but since they have never tasted it they fear that it does not exist. They will not "taste and see how sweet the Lord is."

It is true that there must be a joyful reaction to every test in the process of spiritual transformation, and it is contained in the word Rejoice. "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice." Every time we have met an opportunity with the attitude contained in the words "thank" and "use," we must rejoice. Why? We must rejoice for Christ's sake and for our own sake, because we have come out of it less selfish, more perfect, more

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Christlike, more fit for union with Christ; we must rejoice because we have given Christ, once more, the greatest proof of our love. "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences."

A certain drive was on for a worthy cause. The one in charge requested a miser who had never been known to contribute to charity, to head the list of contributions with a check of one thousand dollars! He asked him to attend the banquet to be given for the men and women selected to conduct the drive. He promised to return the thousand dollars to him if he should ever regret his act of generosity. The miser reluctantly consented. The morning after the banquet the manager approached the miser and asked him if he wanted him to return the thousand dollars. "Keep the thousand," he said "you have taught me a lesson worth a million. You have taught me the joy of giving. I never enjoyed anything so much in my life as the joy and enthusiasm created by my gift, so comparatively small."

We must not be misers with Christ and offer Him nothing, or only what does not

require sacrifice, when He has given Himself and all He has to us. Self-crucifixion does hurt for a moment, but the reaction is sweet. It is unlike any other joy. Once we have tasted the joy of rejoicing in the Lord we shall never be able to enthuse over any other passing joy, except by way of recreation. Every act of crucifixion of the "old man" will be followed by a resurrection of the "new man," and an ascension to a higher degree of perfection, and, as a consequence, of closer union with Jesus Christ. "Seldom," someone said, "is anyone wise enough to trust the paradox that gain arises out of loss." A man who loves and is anxious to build a home for himself and the one he loves, will gladly put up with the grind of daily toil. In like manner, we, if we have found Christ and love Him, shall welcome every opportunity, we shall use it and rejoice. In the midst of all our hardships we shall be filled with enthusiastic joy. St. Paul endured untold hardships, and yet, he assures us, he was filled with comfort: "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations."

Will Durrant declared some time ago,

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in an article on the causes of America's present epidemic of youthful suicide: "We have wealth and energy and confidence and education and opportunity and power. But we have no happiness. Perhaps no age had it and perhaps it will always elude those who seek it consciously." Think of it!

Christ paid the price for happiness. He taught us the philosophy of happiness. It consists in the attitude towards life contained in the three words: Thank, Use and Rejoice. Christ gave us an example. He offered us the grace to live up to the principles these words contain. We may seek happiness and seek it consciously, and we shall not be disappointed.

Lord, the hurt Thou sendest me,
Help me to bear
In silence, nor let others guess
How sad I fare.

Help me to keep it just for Thee,
To clip its wings
And guard it close within my breast
Until it sings!

FRANCIS

Francis gave Christ the five proofs of love just explained.

A Sinless Life

To him mortal sin was crucifying Christ anew, and venial sin offending Him more or less. He repented of the follies of his early life. Christ appeared to him and assured him of the full remission of his sins. "Now on a certain day, while, in a certain lonely place, he was bitterly bewailing the remembrance of past years, the joy of the Holy Spirit came upon him, and he was assured of the full remission of all his offenses." (St. Bonaventure)

He wept over the sins committed by his fellowmen: "When he beheld souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ Jesus being defiled by any stain of sin, he would weep over them with such tenderness of compassion as that he seemed, like a mother in Christ, to be in travail of them daily."

A Life of Perfect Union with Christ

Francis allowed nothing to disturb the

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perfect union between Christ and his soul. He renounced all earthly goods and made God his All. He loved poverty because it was the condition required for undisturbed enjoyment of his Maker. "If we had possessions," he said, "we should need arms for our protection, for thence spring questions and disputes, and the love of God and of one's neighbor is wont to be hindered thereby in many ways: and that is why we will not possess any temporal things in this world." (3 Soc. 35)

We do much harm and repel our fellowmen when our words give the impression that Francis loved poverty for its own sake. He loved poverty as no man ever loved it before, because voluntary poverty alone made it possible for him to pray: "My God and my All." Francis loved poverty as a means as much as he loved God as his end, that is, with his whole heart. He called poverty his "Lady": "My Lady Poverty." The characteristic trait of Francis and his followers has always been undisturbed and perfect union with Christ, the Giver, through the complete and joyful renunciation of His gifts. Francis never taught his brethren that it violates the vow of poverty and that it

interferes with the soul's love of God to use and enjoy what was allowed them for their use. Francis often forbade his companions to imitate him in his extreme devotion to the great emancipator, voluntary poverty.

Secondary Work a Complete Success

Francis made a complete success of life's secondary work. He saw the Holy Spirit in those who were vested with authority over him and he obeyed; and like Christ, he finished the work heaven assigned to him. "The Lord said in the Gospel: 'He who renounces not everything which he possesses can not be My disciple'; and: 'He who will save his soul shall lose it.' That man renounces everything which he possesses and loses his body who gives himself up wholly to the hands of his Superior, in obedience; and whatever he says or does that he knows not to be contrary to his Superior's will (provided that what he does be good) is true obedience. And when the inferior has in view things better and more profitable for his soul than those that his Superior ordains, let him sacrifice his own will to God, and study to fulfill what his

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Superior ordains. For this is obedience founded on charity, since the man sacrifices himself to God and his neighbor. But if the Superior should give an order to the inferior which goes against his conscience, let the inferior not forsake him, though he obey him not. And if he is persecuted by others on that account, let him love them all the more for God's sake. For he who would rather bear persecution than be separated from his brethren truly remains in perfect obedience, for he lays down his soul for his brethren. For there are many Religious who, under the excuse of having better things in view than those their Superiors enjoin, look behind them and return to the vomit of self-will." (Opusc. 58)

Who was the One directing the career of the Man of Assisi? The Holy Spirit. What did Francis do? What he was commanded to do. Why did he do it? To make a success of life's secondary work, to please Christ, and for eternal wages.

His Main Work a Complete Success

Finally, Francis made a complete success of life's main work. In the hour of his death he was, in soul and body, a per-

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fect image of Jesus Christ. Francis saw the Sanctifier behind every person and event, and was grateful. He was on the alert for every opportunity and used it, and he "rejoiced in the Lord always."

On one occasion Francis said to a companion: "I esteem not myself to be a Brother Minor unless I be in the state that I shall describe unto thee. Lo now, I suppose me to be one set in authority over the Brethren; I go unto the Chapter, I preach unto the Brethren and exhort them, and at the end they speak against me, saying: 'Thou mislikest us, for that thou art unlettered, slow of speech, a fool, and simple,' and thus I am cast forth with reviling, little esteemed of all. I tell thee, —unless I can hear such words with unchanged countenance, with unchanged gladness of spirit and unchanged holy intent,—I am vainly called a Brother Minor." (St. Bonaventure)

IV

FINGER EXERCISES

IV

FINGER EXERCISES

Two "Three Finger Exercises"

One of the objections we hear on all sides is that it is practically impossible to lead an interior life in the midst of an active life. It is not easy to make our lives a perfect blending of the active and contemplative life, as our Lord did, but it is not true to say that it is impossible.

It is possible to lead an interior life in the midst of the world's distractions if we use the following Finger Exercises. They contain the ideal attitude in regard to life's secondary and main tasks. Every child can grasp them and remember them at all times and under all conditions. They can be practiced simultaneously, just as we can walk and breathe at one and the same time.

We have only two tasks to perform in this world. We must be at our post, doing the work God has set aside for us, and in the midst of our duties we must sanctify ourselves. The means of grace will give

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us the necessary strength to do life's work well, and to become the saints we are supposed to become. The example of Christ will inspire us to live up to the principles these exercises contain. Love must be the motive. Anyone who lives up to them will walk in the footprints of Him who said:

“FOLLOW ME.”

“You stand somewhat dazed at the opening of life, uncertain as to what you should do and uncertain how to do it. I have never been able to tell why it was that we could not select at once the thing we ought to do and then move forward confidently to its accomplishment. . . . I am satisfied that under such conditions work would be a joy and not a burden.”

(Thomas R. Marshall)

I

OUR SECONDARY WORK

Our secondary work is to become useful branches of Christ, the Vine—efficient workers, and to do our work with the right intention. “I am the Vine, you the branches, he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.”

Finger Exercise Number One

Finger One: The Holy Spirit. Who?

Finger Two: Myself. What?

Finger Three: Christ. Why?

It is the work of the Holy Spirit (Finger One) to transform me (Finger Two) into a useful branch of Christ, the Vine (Finger Three).

Finger One: Who? Who is the One entrusted with the work of shaping my career? The Holy Spirit.

Finger Two: What? What does the Holy Spirit want me to do? What those in authority or what my conscience tell me to do.

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Finger Three: Why? Why does the Holy Spirit want me to make a success of my present duty? He wants me to make a success of life's secondary work; he wants me to do it with the right intention (to please Christ and for eternal wages), and through Mary, in order that I may become a more useful branch of Christ, the Vine.

“It is easy to have vague ideas what perfection is, which serve well enough to talk about when we do not intend to aim at it, but as soon as a person really desires and sets about seeking it himself, he is dissatisfied with anything but what is tangible and clear, and constitutes some sort of direction towards the practice of it.”

(Cardinal Newman)

OUR MAIN WORK

Our main work is to become perfect branches of Christ, the Vine. "I am the Vine, you the branches."

Finger Exercise Number Two

Finger One: The Holy Spirit. Thank.

Finger Two: Myself. Use.

Finger Three: Christ. Rejoice.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit (Finger One) to transform me (Finger Two) into a perfect branch of Christ, the Vine (Finger Three).

Finger One: Thank. I must see the Sanctifier in every person, in every happening. All that happens is sent or permitted by the Holy Spirit for my good. Hence, I must thank Him at once for all that happens, not for its own sake, but because of the spiritual value it contains.

"In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus, concerning you all."

Finger Two: Use. Lower-self wants to reign instead of Christ. He wants to use only what is agreeable to him and because

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it is agreeable. He wants to reject all else. I must crucify lower-self; then higher-self will be free to use all, pleasant or unpleasant alike, for the purpose for which it was sent or permitted.

“They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences.”

Finger Three: Rejoice. If I thank and use, higher-self must rejoice, first for Christ’s sake, then for my own sake, because I am thereby becoming a more perfect branch of Christ, the Vine; more fit for union with Christ.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.”

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IN THE MORNING

A few moments in the world of three:

The Holy Spirit
Myself
Christ

Recall the Finger Exercises and resolve to use them in the course of the day, in order to become a more useful and perfect branch of Christ, the Vine.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to cooperate whole-heartedly with Him in the course of the day.

IN THE EVENING

A few moments in the world of three:

The Holy Spirit
Myself
Christ

How did I live up to the Finger Exercises today?

Contrition, in so far as the day was a failure.

Gratitude, in so far as the day was a success.

NOTE

These Finger Exercises are merely a novel way of directing us in the process of becoming more fit for union with Christ every day, every hour, every moment of our lives. Every time we disregard what they suggest, we withdraw from the influence of the Holy Spirit and allow another spirit to control us, the spirit of the devil, or of the world, or of lower-self.

It is so helpful to know what God expects of us, to know how to attain our goal and, finally, to know that we can not but succeed if we persevere. We are naturally sensitive. We feel it very keenly if others treat us as we should never think of treating them. If we yielded to our inclinations, we should flee from certain persons and conditions; but we must not, if we want to purify and sanctify our souls. We can not become Christlike merely by reading spiritual books; we must go through the whole process of spiritual transformation. "Not everyone that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The principles Christ taught us by word and example will support us in every con-

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ceivable crisis, they will guide us in the midst of joys or trials. They are contained in these simple exercises. If we live up to them we shall become younger, as it were, day by day. "To grow old," someone said, "means to feel Christ's arms getting closer and closer; it certainly feels good to grow old." The most fascinating human beings in the world are not infants and innocent children, but old saints who are ripe for heaven.

V

OUR ENEMY

1. Our One Great Enemy
2. Francis

V

OUR ENEMY

1

Our One Great Enemy

We have one great enemy. We speak of three: the devil, the world, and the flesh; but since the devil and the world can only work through self, it is true to say that self is our one great enemy. By self I mean lower-self. I mean the self who does not want to believe, keep the Commandments, receive the Sacraments, attend Holy Mass; by lower-self I mean the one who does not want to find Christ and love Him. By lower-self I mean the one who does not want to avoid sin, mortal or venial; the one who wants to grieve over every loss save the loss of Christ. By lower-self I mean the one who does not want to make the required effort to make a success of life's secondary and main tasks.

We are apt to think that the causes for our unhappiness and failures are out-

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side of us, and that they are countless, but we must not be misled. "I had many troubles in my life," someone said, "but they never existed." What we consider causes are only occasions. There are many occasions, but only one cause of failure in life, and that one cause is not outside of us, but within us. If used rightly, all the occasions can be turned into opportunities for spiritual growth. If lower-self is our one great enemy, what must we do? Can we drive him out? Can we annihilate him? We can do neither. All that we can do is to tolerate his presence and to crucify him. "There is only one person in the world to whom we may be severe. There is one who deserves it and on whom we may vent all our severity, and that person is self." (Cardinal Manning). St. Paul tells us that they that belong to Christ have crucified this enemy within, so that he can do nothing to interfere with our spiritual progress. What can a man do who is crucified? He can protest, he can curse, he can plead, but he can not move. And if we crucify lower-self, he, too, can not interfere.

"Selflessness is the important thing—the foundation of everything—and if you are not right about this you will be wrong all through. It is the supreme end of the saint, but you can not begin to be any good without it.

"Get down to absolute simplicity. There are many people who seem very good and in every way satisfactory, but are extraordinarily unattractive and somehow all wrong; one would never go to them in trouble. These are people who are full of self.

"What are you underneath? Do you act out or in? Do you refer everything to yourself—always thinking: 'How will it affect me?' If so, you are full of self.

"Deception is very easy on this point. You think yourself full of zeal for the Church because you are very keen about the conversion of your first cousin: but ask yourself if you are as interested in the conversion of a dull negro in Central Africa. If not, why not? God is just as interested in the dull negro—probably more so.

"We sometimes wonder, when we see clearly, whether we have ever done one

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single thing for the love of God. Everything is poisoned by self.

"Every beatitude has its reward, and every reward we are to have in heaven has its counterpart on earth, and the earthly counterpart of our heavenly reward is Christ dwelling in the soul.

"Directly you empty self out of your soul, Christ begins to fill it. Therefore renunciation is not unhappiness, neither is it difficult. It is extraordinarily easy, and the happiest thing in the world.

"The devil is always trying to make religion dull. It is the only interesting thing in the world, full of romance and adventure and happiness. Selflessness is the foundation of everything, and as soon as we get rid of self God comes in: and this is the greatest possible joy." (Robert Hugh Benson)

We must not defend lower-self, therefore; we must not protect him as a father does a child. We must have no pity on lower-self, and we must be glad when others help us in the cruel work of self-crucifixion. Lower-self wants to ruin us, soul and body, for time and eternity. We must turn the tables and hold him captive

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till death ends our association with him forever. When lower-self is crucified, then higher-self can act and reign in us, then higher-self can thank, use, and rejoice always, and thereby grow until we reach "the age of the fullness of Christ." "If once you can gain perfect mastery over yourself," writes St. Bonaventure, "then no enemy without or within can hurt you further."

They tell the story of a man who never thought of saying even a friendly word to his wife and family. A friend called his attention to the fact. He made it clear to him just how he was acting and what an effect it was having on his dear ones, even though they never complained. He listened to what his friend had to say and agreed that he was right. He promised to begin to do better that very day. That evening he went home a changed man. He greeted his wife and children, he said nothing about business and the worries of the day, at the dinner table he led the conversation. He was most considerate in every way. After the meal was over, he went so far as to put on an apron to help dry the dishes.

When his wife saw that she broke down and cried. "What's the matter?" he exclaimed. "Oh, everything has been going wrong today," she replied, "and to cap the climax you come home drunk." His unselfish conduct was so different from what it had been, that there seemed to be only one plausible explanation, namely, that he was drunk.

If we ceased to think of self, talk of self, act and live for self; if we began to live for Christ, and for ourselves and others for Christ's sake, our conduct would be so different that we, too, should appear to be drunk. After the Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles they were changed men. Before, they thought only of their safety; after, only of Christ's interests. Some said mockingly: "These men are full of new wine."

One of the best ways of ending the reign of lower-self is to give ourselves no sympathy, and to act so that others do not think of giving any. In this way we shall, besides crucifying lower-self, all but starve him. We shall feel the need of sympathy, but it will be the right kind, and we shall get it at the right source,

from Him Who said: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you." If we want an example of what havoc lower-self will cause in a man's life, we can not do better than read the Book of Esther. The story of Aman will be read and re-read to the end of time.

We must find Christ and love Him, but we must, above all, prove our love for him. Genuine love is known by complete self-crucifixion, so that Christ may live and act and reign in our lives through higher-self. "Love is terribly real and works a real change in the soul, and it is by its effects that true love is known." (Williamson). "The external penances," a saint said, "imposed upon the body are utterly useless, unless accompanied by the abnegation of the I."

The unselfish generosity of Jesus Christ overwhelms us. There is no pinch or stint or economy about it—these are our invention. There is no radical cure for selfishness except the sincere recognition that there is something greater than the ego. It is a big job trying to be God. No wonder we get fairly worn out. But when we give Him His place and step

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down to ours, we shift a burden heavier than the universe. Everything becomes so comparatively easy and He does such marvelous things for us. The unselfish friends of Christ pleaded with God not to begin to reward them so generously in this world, but they pleaded in vain. Oh, for the light to realize that lower-self is our one great enemy!

Surgeon, cut deep
 Into my soul;
Put me to sleep
 And make me whole.
Repair and rinse
 My soiled desire:
Lance—lance the sins,
 Burn them with fire.

Surgeon, cut deep
 Into my heart:
As the knives creep,
 Find the bad part.
Purge me of lust,
 Fickleness, doubt,
And at one thrust
 Take despair out.

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Surgeon, cut deep
 Into the place
Where we each keep
 Only one face.
Cut down my pride
 Close to the sod.
Dead—Say he died
 Playing with God.

(William Griffith)

FRANCIS

Francis realized that lower-self is our one great enemy. "Among all the unctions of the Holy Ghost which Christ has granted and will grant to His servants, the chief is to conquer self and willingly to bear reproach for the sake of God and the charity of God." (Opusc. 82).

"It was whispered unto his spirit," writes St. Bonaventure, "that the warfare of Christ is to be begun by victory over self."

Lower-self in Francis was crucified and higher-self was in control. He called trials his sisters. "And when once he was harassed more sorely than usual by sharp pains, a certain simple Brother said unto him: 'Brother, pray the Lord that He deal more gently with thee, for me seemeth that His hand is laid more heavily on thee than is right.' Hearing this, the holy man groaned, and cried out, saying: 'Did I not know the simple purity that is in thee, I would from henceforth have shunned thy company.' " (St. Bonaventure)

VI

OUR FRIEND

1. Our One Great Friend
2. Francis

VI

OUR FRIEND

1

Our One Great Friend

If we could realize how much our Lord loves us we should die of joy. Is this an exaggeration? One glance at a Crucifix is sufficient to assure us that exaggeration is impossible when trying to express our Lord's infinite love for us. "I see in the Almighty," St. Catherine of Genoa would say, "so strong a desire to unite Himself to reasonable creatures made by Him and after His image, that if the devil could free himself from his sin, the Lord would raise him to the heights to which Lucifer hoped to attain by his revolt; that is to say, He would make him like unto God, not indeed by nature, or by essence, but by participation."

If we practice external religion; if we use the means of grace to fill ourselves with divine strength; if we practice the interior life; if we find Christ, love Him and prove our love for Him, then love between Christ and ourselves will not be one-sided, it will be mutual;—then we

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shall be mutual friends. Think of it, the God-Man, Jesus Christ, our Friend! It would be a privilege to be able to say: "The President is my personal friend." It is infinitely more wonderful to be able to say: "Jesus Christ is my personal Friend."

We wonder what we must do to enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ within us, the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; what we must do before we shall long for eternal union with Him in heaven? The answer is: to become like Him. Then we shall enjoy His company always; we shall never lose sight of Him; we shall enjoy His company when we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; we shall long for heaven; we shall make not only acts of faith and love, but acts of hope. We shall believe in Him, hope in Him, love Him.

Thy still white Face, O Christ, upon a
tree,
Looks down through all the ages, haunting
me.
A frail white Host, O Christ, concealing
Thee,
Controls my life, forever luring me.

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Thy shining Face, O Christ, I thirst to
see,

And languish daily for eternity.

(Margaret L. Cunningham)

The conscious companionship of Jesus Christ will do much to make us more and more like Him. It will be a great aid in the process of spiritual transformation. "Tell me with whom you go and I will tell you what you are."

If we have a real friend, is there anything we would not do for him, if it were in our power to do so? Surely not. Christ is the Lord of heaven and earth. He can do marvelous things for us even in this world, and He does, as we know from the lives of His intimate friends, the saints. The wonderful relationship between Christ and the saints is described in detail in books on Supernatural Mysticism. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for those that love Him."

Sinclair Lewis complains that "the profession of religion is agonizingly dull." Men who speak thus have a caricature of religion in their minds. They certainly

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have never learned what real religion is. Religion is not so much what we do, it is what we are; it is not what we are in church, but also what we are after we leave the presence of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Are we friends of Christ? That's the question! "To speak with the tongues of angels, to have the gift of prophecy, to know all mysteries and all knowledge, to have faith which could remove mountains, to distribute all our goods to the poor, to deliver our bodies to be burned," all these, according to St. Paul, are nothing, unless we love Christ and Christ loves us, unless we are living a life of union with Him by love. If we are living so that for us "to live is Christ and to die is gain," then life will become more wonderful the closer we draw to Christ, it will never be "agonizingly dull." Doctor Brownson understood this when he declared that the whole world is too small a price to pay for one hour of life in the Catholic Church, that is, for one hour of union with Christ.

One of the greatest services any man can render the cause of Christ is to make men realize that the highest in the spirit-

ual life, I mean, that which made saints, friends of our Lord, is nothing out of the ordinary. Take the five proofs of love mentioned above. Do they require more than a mother expects from a child, or a friend from a friend? Why be so sensitive about ingratitude on the part of those we befriended, and overlook the fact that we may be doing the same thing to Christ, our Friend, without even realizing it!

All that our Lord is waiting for is the time when He can be a real divine and human Friend to us. If we carry out the simple, but comprehensive directions given in Part One of this book, we shall be doing our part, and if we persevere, the day will come when our Lord will shower upon us blessings greater and more numerous by far than we ever dared to hope for. It is impossible to become a real friend to our One Great Friend without becoming the object of divine generosity, not only in the next world, but also in this. Our great aim must be to be on intimate terms with Him Who holds heaven and earth in the palm of His Hand. If those who have severed their

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friendship with Christ or allowed it to grow cold were shown what was in store for them had they persevered, the shock would either kill them or drive them insane.

We must begin as the soul in the "Hound of Heaven" ended; we must realize that if we really find Christ we shall find in Him all that is good, all that we are craving for, all that will satisfy for time and for eternity.

In spite of all the littleness in me,
 Lord, may I grow,
Until I reach unto eternity
 From here below.

For though a fragile twig, oh, none the
 less,
If set in Thee,
I may become in strength and fruitfulness,
 A mighty tree.

They who have grown were planted very
 deep,
So they could rise,
And stand against the stress of winds
 that sweep
Across the skies.

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Then may I stand through every season's
 strife,
 A useful tree,
Until I've reached the fulness of all life,
 Dear Christ, in Thee!

(Anonymous)

2

FRANCIS

Francis was a real, personal friend of Christ. Self was crucified in him, and Christ took up His abode in his soul. The union between Christ and Francis was perfect. He became in soul and also in body a perfect image of Jesus Christ. Concerning this union, the biographer of our Seraphic Saint wrote: "Of the ardent love that glowed in Francis, the friend of the Bridegroom, who can avail to tell? He seemed utterly consumed, like unto a coal that is set on fire, by the flame of the love divine. And when he uttered or heard the Name of Jesus, he was filled with an inward rejoicing, and seemed all

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transfigured outwardly, as though some honey-sweet taste had soothed his palate, or some melodious sound his ear." (St. Bonaventure)

We know what wonderful graces our Lord bestowed upon Francis, and how unspeakably grateful he was: "Lord, I pray Thee," he exclaimed, "that the burning and delicious ardour of Thy love may detach my soul from all things which are under heaven, so that I may die for love of Thy love, O Thou Who for love of my love hast deigned to die." Often, Francis spent whole nights in a state of ecstasy, repeating the prayer which had become as natural to him as drawing his breath: "My God and my All." Truly, our Saint could say: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

PART TWO

MYSTIC

VII

MYSTIC

1. An Explanation
2. Francis

VII

MYSTIC

1

An Explanation

If mysticism is a life which aims at union with God, then anyone who lives up to all I mentioned in Part One is a mystic. Everyone is called to be a saint, a mystic.

“Shall we say that it is a very extraordinary sort of life? If by extraordinary, we mean that it is seldom met with; yes, alas! it is so. But if we mean an impracticable, a well-nigh impossible life, one meant only for a very few chosen souls, we are in error. No; mystical life is neither impracticable nor well nigh impossible, nor is it only for a few. It is simply the very perfection of Christian life to which we are called, and we shall be severely punished in purgatory if we have not attained it. Mystical life appears to us extraordinary and well nigh impossible only because we are ‘of little faith,’ and have allowed our charity to

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grow cold. Mystical life is the right kind of life; any other is wrong." (Savinien Louismet, O. S. B.)

When we speak of mystics we usually mean so-called "born mystics"; we mean those who from childhood were religiously inclined—"different." It is in this sense I am using the word Mystic in Part Two.

Just as "born artists" naturally enjoy art, so "born mystics" naturally enjoy asceticism and mysticism. It is not a matter of predestination, pure and simple; it is the result of natural influences, inheritance, environment and education.

In the case of "born mystics" we usually find that one or both parents were deeply religious. If the father or mother of the mystic child is inclined to be worldly, it is evident that such a parent and worldly friends will do all in their power to win that child for the world. It is a calamity if they succeed and the child becomes a restless, unsatisfied wanderer on the face of the earth. Such parents and friends are jealous of God. They forget that their children belong to Him and that He merely entrusts them to their safe keeping, and that their boys or girls

must follow when He calls them to His service.

Born mystics are faithful to externals. It may be that for years they consider these religion. But eventually they realize that these can not be the heart of religion, that they need more than Commandments and a Rule of Life. Sooner or later they will want to know how to really find Christ, how to love Him, and how to prove their love for Him. They will feel the need of the inner life and the principles of interior development described in Part One. God may see fit to allow them to go on for a long time without finding the light they are seeking, but if they never cease to seek, they shall, in God's own time, find without fail. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." They will discover the right attitude in regard to external religion and to the interior life, and once they find they will make rapid progress.

If for some years they seem to enjoy worldly amusements, they indulge only to try to forget the agony of a soul in quest of the Holy Grail. To those who do not

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understand them they may appear changeable, because they try one means of relief after another, but in reality they are consistent seekers of happiness. As soon as they find they never again change, they are at rest forever. The only change that then takes place in them is the change of developing spiritually, until they have reached that degree of union with Christ to which they are called. Born mystics are not pessimists; they do not despise the good things of life. They are optimists, and have, more than others, the capacity of enjoying all that God has made.

When the mystic decides to break with fleeting pleasures, the world realizes the loss it is about to sustain. The world is only too well aware of the fact that it is losing one of its best prospects. Men realize that the mystic possesses great capacity for enjoying the good things of life; they realize that he is making a great sacrifice, but they can not appreciate what he is gaining. They do not understand that he is giving up that which is transitory for that which is eternal. The world resents the loss of promising subjects for another evident reason. Just when men

think they have succeeded in quieting their conscience, in making themselves believe that religion is a myth and its votaries fools, they behold a relative, a friend, or an acquaintance—one who is a mystic, the person they respect more than anyone else they have ever known—become interested in religion, in external religion and in the interior life, or quietly forego a worldly career for the religious life. Then it is that such men realize that religion must be, after all, the one great reality.

Sometimes mystics are called persons with one-track minds. If by this term men mean that to the born mystic Christ is "the beginning and the end," and all else in the world means to know and love and serve Him better, then they have one-track minds indeed. But if they mean that they are narrow and impractical, they are mistaken. If a man is impractical, it is not because he is a mystic.

Born mystics are often accused of lack of interest in their work. The fact is, they usually do more and better work than others, but they do not live for their work; they use every effort to succeed, but their great interest is the spiritual life.

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"I thought, at least," writes Pascal, "to find many fellow students in the study of man, and that this was the real study that befits us. I was deceived, for there are still fewer than those who study mathematics. It is only for want of knowing how to pursue this study that we seek others."

Academic minds frequently belittle mystics, especially if they are not brilliant students. If mystics are not as successful in their studies as others, I mean as far as memory work is concerned, it is not because they are not gifted, but because they find it difficult to become absorbed in learning for its own sake. The mystic is consistent; he is absorbed in the end, and in all else only because it is a means, and in so far as it is a means to an end. He realizes what is useful, what is important, and what is necessary. Mystics enjoy the company of Christ, the company of fellow-mystics, books written by mystics, and solitude. They do not look down upon others who are less gifted spiritually. They fit in anywhere. "They are like everyone else," as someone put it, "only more so." They are the most natural,

human and normal persons in the world. They are as simple as children. Mystics are eccentric, but their eccentricity is that of the saints. "We must not fear to be thought eccentric. What is eccentricity but being out of centre? And we must be out of centre, as to the world, if we would be adjusted to that Divine Centre, of which the world knows nothing." (Keith Falconer)

If personality means to be oneself completely, then mystics possess a wonderful personality. No one realizes better than themselves how generous God has been to them, and they never forget that "to whom much is given, much will be required." They are never scandalized. Their one surprise is that conditions are not worse than they are. They are convinced that if they had received as little as some others, they would be as bad as those who have fallen by the wayside.

Mystics, if they could have their way, would become contemplatives. They have intuition, they see so much, they are so sensitive, they feel so keenly for others, they are so sympathetic, that it is agony for them to see the misery that surrounds

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them on every side. Their desire for a life of undisturbed union with Christ is so intense that nothing but conscience and the call of God can induce them to forego a life hidden with God.

If born mystics take up the active life, they become the world's most successful workers. They know human nature because they know themselves, and the man who knows men is fit to rule the world. Mystics are "the salt of the earth and the light of the world." They are in the world, but "not of the world." Their lives are a perfect blending of that rarest of combinations—the active and the contemplative spirit. They are so much in demand, not because they want to be, but because they dare not refuse Christ in their fellowmen, and because there is so great a demand for what they have to give. Only on the day of revelations will the world know what one faithful born mystic has done for God's glory and the welfare of his fellowmen.

"Not for the fleeting things that wise men
scorn,
But for the things eternal was I born."

“It is difficult to estimate the moral power which a single individual, trained to practice what he teaches, may acquire in his own circle, in the course of years. While the Scriptures are thrown upon the world, as if the common property of any who choose to appropriate them, he is, in fact, the legitimate interpreter of them, and none other; the Inspired Word being but a dead letter (ordinarily considered) except as transmitted from one mind to another. While he is unknown to the world, yet, within the range of those who see him he will become the object of feelings different in kind from those which mere intellectual excellence excites. The men commonly held in popular estimation are greatest at a distance, they become small as they are approached; but the attraction exerted by unconscious holiness is of an urgent irresistible nature; it persuades the weak, the timid, the wavering, the inquiring; it draws forth the affection and loyalty of all who are in a measure like-minded; and over the thoughtless or perverse multitude it exercises a sovereign compulsory sway, bidding them fear and keep silence, on the ground of its own

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right divine to rule them,—its hereditary claim on their obedience, though they understand not the principles or counsels of that spirit 'which is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

"And if such be the personal influence exerted by the teacher of truth over the mixed crowd of men whom he encounters, what (think we) will be the power over the select number just referred to, who have already, in a measure, disciplined their hearts after the law of holiness and felt themselves, as it were, individually addressed by the invitation of His example? These are they whom our Lord especially calls His 'elect,' and came to 'gather together into one,' for they are worthy. And these, too, are they who are ordained in God's Providence to be the salt of the earth,—to continue, in their turn, the succession of His witnesses, that heirs may never be wanting to the royal line, though death sweeps away each successive generation of them to their rest and their reward. These, perhaps, by chance fell in with their destined Father in the Truth, not at once discerning his

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real greatness. At first, perhaps, they thought his teaching fanciful and parts of his conduct extravagant or weak. Years might pass away before such prejudices were entirely removed from their minds, but by degrees they would discern more and more the trace of unearthly majesty about him, they would witness from time to time his trial under various events of life and would still find, whether they looked above or below, that he rose higher and was based deeper than they could ascertain by measurement. Then at length, with astonishment and fear, they would become aware that Christ's presence was before them, and in the words of Scripture would glorify God in His servant, and all this while they themselves would be changing into that glorious Image which they gazed upon, and be in training to succeed him in its propagation." (Cardinal Newman)

2

FRANCIS

"The general characteristic of contemplatives is to attract the anger and the

irony of men. The very place where they live becomes an irritant to those who are blind, because of the light by which it is suffused. The nature of their acts lends itself admirably to outbursts of irony. Both the principle and the aim of their acts escape the eyes of men. The act alone falls within their glance, isolated, cut off from its principle, cut off from its end, deprived of the atmosphere in which alone the spirit that animates it can live. Thus thrust upon the world, without explanation, the life of the contemplative is that of a stranger, and we mistake it for that of an enemy. Men do not know what to think of those strangers who are known as saints—not strangers through their indifference, but strangers through their superiority—and not knowing what to think, men set about laughing. They laugh because laughter breaks out when a thing appears to be without any connection with surrounding things, just as our tears flow when the connection is seen to be profound. The spectacle of an individual who is totally dissimilar to those among whom he lives, more isolated than

in the midst of a desert, gives the occasion and cause for laughter.

"That is why the world laughs at saints, especially at contemplative saints, because, of all holy things, contemplation is what man understands the least." (Ernest Hello). Yet it so happens, that by some strange exception men laugh little, or indeed not at all, at St. Francis.

Francis was a born mystic. His mother understood him, his father did not. When neighbors talked about him, his mother would answer: "What is it you think of my son? He shall be a son of God yet through grace."

Francis, when a child, did things to which he attached a religious significance, which would never have occurred to anyone but a born mystic. "When in the absence of his father Francis remained at home, even if he was eating alone in the house with his mother, he would cover the table with loaves of bread as if he were preparing for the whole family; and when his mother asked him why he was putting so many loaves on the table, he answered that he did so in order to give alms to the poor, because he had determined to

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give to anyone who asked alms for the sake of God. His mother, who loved him above her other children, bore with him in such things, and observed his doings, greatly wondering thereat in her heart; for, whereas he had been wont to set his heart on going after his companions when they invited him, and had been so attracted by their company that he would many times rise from table even if he had only eaten a little, leaving his parents in distress on account of his hasty departure, now his whole heart was fixed on looking out for the poor, or on hearing of any to whom he might give alms." (3 Soc. 9).

He threw himself, or rather he tried to throw himself wholeheartedly into worldly amusements, but he could not; his heart was elsewhere. His father was delighted, for worldly reasons, with his popularity, and when Francis finally turned his back upon the world he became furious. He demanded that Francis return to him everything he had given him. Francis gladly did it and returned the very clothes he wore. His father became the victim of the worst kind of jealousy there is, jealousy of God, and accepted the gar-

ments. The break between Francis and his father, and the union between his Heavenly Father and himself was complete.

Francis longed for the contemplative life, but to prove that he wanted to do God's will, not his own, he prayed and had his friends pray. "What," saith he, "do ye counsel, Brethren, what do ye command? Shall I devote myself unto prayer, or shall I go about preaching? Of a truth, I that am little, and simple, and rude in speech have received more grace of prayer than of speaking. Now in prayer, there seemeth to be the gain and heaping up of graces, in preaching, a certain giving out of the gifts received from heaven; in prayer, again, a cleansing of the inward feelings, and an union with the one, true and highest good, together with a strengthening of virtue; in preaching, the spiritual feet wax dusty, and many things distract a man, and discipline is relaxed. Finally, in prayer, we speak with God and hear Him, and live as it were the life of Angels, while we converse with Angels; in preaching, we must needs practice much condescension toward men and

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living among them as fellowmen must think, see, say, and hear such things as pertain unto men. Yet one thing is there to set against these, the which in God's sight would seem to weigh more than they all, to wit, that the only-begotten Son of God, Who is the highest wisdom, left His Father's bosom for the salvation of souls, that, instructing the world by His example, He might preach the word of salvation unto men, whom He both redeemed at the cost of His Sacred Blood, and cleansed in a laver and gave them to drink, keeping back naught of Himself, but for our salvation freely bestowing all. And forasmuch as we ought to do all things after the pattern of those things that were shown us in Him as on the lofty mount, it seemeth that it might be more acceptable unto God that, laying aside leisure, I should go forth unto the work." (St. Bonaventure)

Francis consulted especially Brother Sylvester and St. Clare. After prayer and deliberation and special light from heaven, he gave up his own will in this important matter and began to make his life like that of Christ: a perfect blending of the

active and contemplative. "The reverend priest and the virgin vowed unto God were marvelously in agreement concerning this, the Holy Spirit revealing it unto them, to wit, that it was the divine will that the herald of Christ should go forth to preach. When, therefore, the Brethren returned, and, according unto what they had heard, pointed out the will of God, Francis forthwith rose and girded himself, and without any delay set forth on his journey. And with such fervour did he go, to fulfill the divine behest, and with such speed did he hasten on his way, that he seemed—the hand of the Lord being upon him—to have put on new power from heaven." (St. Bonaventure)

We must not make the mistake some seem to make by thinking that St. Francis was not a genius because he could not become interested in learning for its own sake. He valued learning if it brought a man nearer to Christ, but if it did not, he had no use for it as far as he was concerned. St. Francis was one of the world's greatest geniuses. No one but a genius could have accomplished what he did. He was a practical man. When he was told

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to restore the house of God, he did not understand. He thought it meant to repair the little church of St. Damian. He set to work and repaired it and two other churches.

St. Francis was a handier man
Than those who all the crafts combine;
St. Francis was as handy a man
As once was One in Palestine.
At Christmas when men's doors were
shut
Against the gift unpriced,
He built a little wattle hut
And made a crib for Christ.

(Enid Dinnis)

When Francis learned that he had made a mistake, that the call was to restore the Church of God, he did not hesitate to undertake this tremendous task. He began it by building three spiritual temples within the Church, the First, Second, and Third Orders of St. Francis. He became an Apostle, not only at home, but three times he set out for missionary labors in foreign lands.

Francis did not use the means to become an author; yet his writings, the

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spontaneous outbursts of a man to whom "faith was the evidence of things that appear not," are being circulated to this day. Some of his sayings compare favorably with writings of the world's most original and brilliant minds. "For the rest, even though St. Francis' literary culture was incomplete, his constant contemplation of 'the things that are above' and the perfect purity of his life whetted alike his understanding of supernatural truth and of the human heart, and so it comes to pass that his simple words written down in the far-off thirteenth century and with a fashion of speech different from ours, yet work wonders to this day; while the tomes of many a learned doctor 'leave all things as they were before.' " (Pascal Robinson, O. F. M.)

St. Francis was a wiser man
Than all the clerks of Oxenford;
St. Francis was more lettered than
The learned schoolmen of the Lord.
His lore from Nature's book he spelt,
A lettered man was he,
And in his house of Studies dwelt
Beneath the greenwood tree.

(Enid Dinnis)

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St. Francis was a most effective preacher. On a few occasions he prepared his sermons, but when he began to open his lips the thoughts carefully committed to memory left him, and he spoke, as was his wont, from his heart, and won the hearts of all who heard him. "Thus on a time, when he was about to preach in the presence of the Pope and the Cardinals, at the suggestion of the Lord Bishop of Ostia he had committed unto memory a certain carefully prepared sermon, and, standing in the midst to set forth the words of edification, found that he had so utterly forgotten it all as that he knew not how to speak a word thereof. When with fruitful humility he had confessed this, he set himself to invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit, and forthwith began to pour forth words so mighty in effect, and of such wondrous power to move the minds of those illustrious men unto repentance, as that it was manifestly seen that it was not himself that spake, but the Spirit of the Lord." (St. Bonaventure)

St. Bonaventure tells us that for a time he preached in the Cathedral every Sunday: "The words that fell from him were

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listened for as eagerly as though it were an Angel of the Lord speaking. For there was in him a surpassing excellence of the virtues, the spirit of prophecy, power of miracles, an eloquence in preaching inspired from heaven, the submission unto him of the creatures that lack reason, a mighty moving of men's hearts at the hearing of his words, a learning given him of the Holy Spirit beyond all human teaching, license to preach granted him by the supreme Pontiff as the result of a revelation, yea, and the Rule too, wherein the manner of the preaching was set forth, confirmed by the same Vicar of Christ, and, finally, the signs of the King Most High imprinted on his body after 'the manner of a seal; these gave unanswerable evidence unto the whole world, as it were by ten witnesses, that Francis the herald of Christ was worthy of reverence in his ministry, was of authority in his teaching, and was to be marveled at in his saintliness, and that through these virtues he had preached the Gospel of Christ like one that was indeed a messenger of God.'" (St. Bonaventure)

Francis knew himself, and hence he

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knew human nature. He became a great social service worker. "In twenty short years this mystic and ecstatic accomplished more in the field of social service than have even the greatest of so-called practical men. He died when forty-four years old, yet he has left behind him a name that will never die." (Father Ross, C. S. P.)

Born mystics, I said, are sensitive. They long for the contemplative life in order to devote themselves, without distraction, to a life of union with Christ; in order to adore God, thank Him, ask His mercy and His blessing upon the world. They long to do this for their own sake, and for those who neglect these first and most sacred of obligations, and finally, to make reparation for the sins of men. But when God inspires them to remain in the world, to go about doing good as Christ did, they obey; and although they feel keenly the misery around them, they are never gloomy. St. Francis and his followers were called the jesters of the Lord.

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St. Francis was a merrier man
Than all the jesters up at Court;
St. Francis was a merrier man
Than those who at the play disport.
For since so goodly a thing is mirth,
Therein all men agree,
He sought it where all good finds birth,
In God's infinity.

(Enid Dinnis)

Francis was a born mystic, but, like every real genius, he was a perfectly balanced personality, and it is remarkable that he is one man who has appealed to Catholics and non-Catholics alike, a man who was not accused by the realists as too idealistic, nor by the idealists as too realistic. Benson calls him "the all but perfect imitator of the Poor Man of Galilee."

A mystic is :

One who sees
What others can not,
One who knows the lifted veil,
Strange things hidden from all others,
Mysteries where others quail.

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One to whom God speaks,
Has spoken,
One to whom comes mystic thought,
Travail of his bitter anguish,
On the heights which he has sought.

Jesus was a mystic
Lonely—
Oh, so lonely;
Francis, all,
Who have followed in His footsteps,
Who have listened to His call.

Mystic—one
Who shares the vision,
Shares the Cross,
The Calvary,
Mystic, chosen
For that sharing
Of Christ's joy
And agony."

(T. S.)

PART THREE
REFORMER

VIII

REFORMER

1. Explanation
2. Francis

VIII

REFORMER

1

An Explanation

Saints and born mystics are reformers. They reform themselves, and are prepared to make a success of the intricate work of reforming others. They are reformers, first of all, by the irresistible sermon of their lives. "Precept freezes, while example warms. Precept addresses us, example lays hold of us. Precept is a marble statue, example glows with life, a thing of flesh and blood." (Gladstone). They also preach reform. Words are powerful, but only when they fall from the lips of those whose lives are in perfect accord with their words. By reformer I here mean not only a saint and a mystic, who preaches reform by word and example, but one who was called by God in an extraordinary way, one who has received extraordinary gifts from God, one whose work was confirmed by miracles. It is in this sense that I am

using the word "Reformer" in Part Three.

When such reformers were called by God, they applied to Rome for the approval of the representative of Christ, the Holy Father, upon their work. These men were often unknown when they were chosen, and the work to which they were called was so unusual that the Holy See turned them away. It was necessary in such cases for God Himself to step in and to reveal to the Father of Christendom that the ones who applied to him were indeed men of God, destined to become, in His hands, instruments of genuine and far-reaching reform. It is almost too evident to say what was the result. If men run after impostors who make promises they never keep, we can easily imagine, even if we had no record of it, what happened when real leaders appeared among men, leaders with extraordinary light and power, men who redeemed their promises and cured their fellow-men miraculously in soul and body.

FRANCIS

Francis was a saint, he was a born mystic, and hence, he was a true reformer. But he was also a reformer in the sense I have just explained. He was called by God in an extraordinary way. In a vision God called him to begin his life's work; it seemed a call to a military life. He betook himself to a certain Count in the town of Apulia, hoping in his service to win glory in arms. But the Lord revealed to him that he was called to undertake a spiritual conquest. And Francis said: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "And the Lord said unto him: 'Return unto thy country, for the vision that thou hast seen betokeneth that which shall be spiritually wrought, and is to be fulfilled in thee not by mortal counsel, but by divine.' So, when it was morning, he returned in haste toward Assisi, confident and rejoicing, awaiting the will of the Lord." (St. Bonaventure)

Companions rallied around the standard of Francis. When he presented him-

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self at the Curia in Rome to obtain approbation of his Rule, the Holy Father turned him away, not because he was not favorably disposed, but because of the opposition of some Cardinals who considered the Rule too severe. "Pray unto Christ, my son," said the Holy Father, "that He may show us His will through thee, and when we know it more surely, we will more confidently assent unto thy holy desires." (St. Bonaventure)

It was then that the Pope saw in a dream "the Lateran Basilica about to fall, when a little poor man, of mean stature and humble aspect, propped it with his own back, and thus saved it from falling. 'Verily,' saith he, 'he it is that by his work and teaching shall sustain the Church of Christ.' From this vision, he was filled with an especial devotion unto him, and in all ways disposed himself unto his supplication, and ever loved the servant of Christ with an especial affection. Then and there he granted his request, and promised at a later day to bestow yet more upon him. He sanctioned the Rule and gave him a command to preach." (St. Bonaventure)

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Francis was not only called in a miraculous manner; he received extraordinary light for his Apostolate: "Being asked at Siena by a certain devout man, a doctor of sacred theology, concerning sundry problems hard of understanding, he laid bare the hidden things of the divine wisdom with such luminous exposition that that learned man was mightly astonished, and exclaimed in amazement: 'Verily, the theology of this Holy Father, borne aloft by purity and meditation as though by wings, is as a flying eagle, while our learning creepeth on its belly on the earth.' Nor was it unfitting that the holy man should receive from God an understanding of the Scriptures, seeing that by the imitation of Christ he fulfilled and set forth in his deeds their perfect truth, and by the abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit had within him, in his own heart, an instructor therein." (St. Bonaventure)

And finally God confirmed the work of Francis by miracles. He healed the sick, and in the name of Jesus, wrought many other kinds of miracles. "He, indeed, as he went through divers districts, preached

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the Gospel with fervour, the Lord working with him and confirming the word with signs following. For in the power of His Name Francis, the herald of the truth did cast forth demons, heal the sick, and what is more, by the might of his preaching, did soften and convert penitent hearts, restoring health unto body and mind at the same time." (St. Bonaventure)

Francis was, indeed, a Reformer.

IX

HOW THE MAN WHO WAS NOBODY
WON THE
HEART OF THE WORLD

“The crown is not the kingdom, nor is one King because he wears a crown.”
(Harold Bell Wright)

In the beginning I said that it would be necessary to speak of saint, mystic and reformer, and St. Francis as an example of all three, before it should be possible to state in a few words how Francis won the heart of the world. How did Francis win the heart of the world?

Jesus Christ predicted that He should draw all hearts to Himself. How did He bring it about? Did He tell us? “And I, if I be lifted up,” He said, “shall draw all things to Myself.” Jesus Christ was God and Man. He became “a worm and no man.” He could not become the last in reality, but He could take upon Himself the sins of the world and become by proxy the Victim of the crimes committed by the human race. This He did. This is the reason why Jesus Christ

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won the heart of the world. World conquerors subjected the world by force of arms. Christ did it with love. "And I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all things to Myself." We shall win the hearts of men in so far as we approach the example of Christ.

Francis walked as nearly in the footprints of Christ as it is possible for a man to do. He, too, won the heart of the world. How did he do it? By becoming the last among sinners, though the seraph among saints. He was not divine, and he could not become a worm; but he was a saint among saints, and in his own estimation he became the last among criminals. Francis was convinced if a criminal had been taught how to become a saint, if he had come into the world a born mystic, and if God had given him the extraordinary blessings which He had bestowed upon him, that such a criminal would have been more grateful, would have become a greater saint and reformer than himself. "By the grace of God I am what I am," he said. In his own estimation he was the last and least of men.

Francis won the hearts of saints and

sinners. He was irresistible. Even the animals and birds followed him. Men of his day idolized him. He is to this day "Everybody's St. Francis." Francis knew that he was nothing in himself, that he was a sinner. He realized that he was deserving of credit for his marvelous cooperation with grace, but when he thought of the reward even in this world, he was overwhelmed. Pride had become to him an impossibility. He was convinced that it was the grace of God that saved him from a life more sinful than that of the world's worst criminal. Christ dealt with sinners so kindly that they accused Him of being a friend of sinners; and Francis was so deferential to sinners that they might have condemned him on the score of treating sinners like princes-elect. There was as great a potential sinner as saint in Francis, and he realized that it was the grace of God that made it possible for him, in spite of the presence of lower-self, to rise completely above nature and become really a happy man, an angel in human form—a saint.

Francis has admirers the world over. Some make pilgrimages to Assisi; some

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have spent months and years in the atmosphere which hovers about the country where he lived and died. Ask them for an explanation of the popularity of the Saint of Assisi. Some will venture a reply, others will tell you that they have never been able to solve the puzzle. Fortunately, the phenomenon is not a puzzle to the man of faith. Francis himself gave us the solution of the problem.

"Francis, whence comes it," asked Brother Masseo, "that all the world runs after thee?" St. Francis replied: "God has sought through the world, seeking by what miserable wretch He can best manifest His power. His most divine eyes, falling upon the earth, have not been able to find anything so vile, so base, so petty, so ignoble as myself. That is the reason of His choice." "I am nothing," Francis wished to say, "and the world can not but marvel at the gifts God has bestowed upon nobody, and the work He has accomplished through nobody."

By becoming the man who was nobody, Francis won the heart of the world, not only for Christ, but also for himself.

X

A PREDICTION THAT HAS
NEVER FAILED

"The Last Shall Be The First"

I do not think that Death can be
A Monster so to fear and dread,
'Tis but the Gateway, Lord, to Thee
The Way that Thou hast gone ahead
 To wait for me;
The soul's first draft of boundless liberty
From Self and Sin and Human Frailty.
Come, then, sweet Sister, Death!
 Come welcomingly!

(Anonymous)

"The last," Christ declared, "shall be the first." Christ, the last, the worst of criminals by proxy, became the first. He who became "a worm" rose from the dead by His own power; He ascended into heaven by His own power; and now He is sitting at the right hand of His Father; and at the end of time He shall come to judge the living and the dead. Christ is the Central Figure in the history of the world. "He humbled Himself, be-

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coming obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

Francis, who was convinced that he was nobody, became "Everybody's St. Francis." Christ assured him that his Order should continue to the end of time. "I have called this Religion, I will keep it and feed it, and, when some fall off, I will raise up others in their place, yea, so that, were none born, I would even cause them to be born. And by whatsoever shocks this little poor Religion may be shaken, it shall always abide unscattered under My guard." (St. Bonaventure)

Francis knew beforehand when he was to die: "But he himself knew long before his death when it should be, and, when the day of his departure was at hand, said unto the Brethren that he was about to put off the tabernacle of his

body, even as it had been revealed unto him of Christ." (St. Bonaventure)

His body did not rise like Christ's, but it retained the five wounds and shone with a dazzling whiteness: "In those blessed limbs were seen the nails marvelously fashioned out of his flesh by the divine might, and so implanted in that flesh sprang back unto the other, like nerves that be joined together and taut. Moreover, there was manifestly seen in his body the scar of the wound in the side, nor inflicted nor wrought by man, but like unto the wounded side of the Saviour, the which, in Our Redeemer Himself, afforded us the holy mystery of man's redemption and regeneration. The appearance of the nails was black like iron, but the wound in the side was ruddy, and by a contraction of the flesh shaped as it were into a circle, in appearance like a rose most fair. The rest of his flesh,—which aforetime both from his infirmities and from natural complexion had tended toward swarthinness,—now shone with a dazzling whiteness, and was a type of the beauty of its second state and royal apparel." (St. Bonaventure)

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One of his Brothers saw the departing soul of Francis, borne on a bright cloudlet, rise to heaven: "One of his Brethren and disciples saw that blessed soul, under the likeness of a star exceeding bright, borne on a dazzling cloudlet over many waters, mounting in a straight course unto heaven, as though it were radiant with the dazzling whiteness of his exalted sanctity, and filled with the riches of divine wisdom and grace alike, by the which the holy man was found worthy to enter the abode of light and peace, where with Christ he resteth for evermore." (St. Bonaventure)

To another Brother it was granted to see the throne Francis now occupies in heaven: "Falling into an ecstasy, he beheld among many seats in heaven, one that was more honorable than the rest, adorned with precious stones, and shining with utmost splendour. Marveling within himself at the splendour of this exalted throne, he began to consider with anxious thought who should be deemed worthy to sit thereon. Then, as he considered, he heard a voice saying unto him: 'This seat pertained unto one of the fal-

len Angels, and is now kept for the humble Francis.' At length, when the Brother had come back unto himself from that trance of prayer, he followed the holy man as he went forth, as was his wont. And as they walked by the way, conversing of God each in turn, that Brother, not unmindful of his vision, inquired of him discreetly what he thought of himself. And the humble servant of Christ answered him: 'I think myself the chief of sinners.' When the Brother said in opposition that he could not, with a sound conscience, say or feel this, Francis added: 'If any man, howsoever guilty, had received such mercy from Christ as I, I verily think he would have been far more acceptable unto God than I.' Then, by the hearing of such marvelous humility, the Brother was assured of the truth of the vision that had been shown him, knowing by the witness of the Holy Gospel that the truly humble shall be exalted unto that excellent glory wherefrom the proud is cast down." (St. Bonaventure)

St. Bonaventure concludes the life of his great friend, St. Francis, in the following words: "Even as that blessed man in

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life had been distinguished by marvelous tokens of virtue, so too from the day of his departure unto this present time, he doth shine throughout the divers parts of the world in the light of famed marvels and miracles, the divine power glorifying him. For the blind and the deaf, the dumb and the lame, the dropsical and the paralysed, the possessed and the leper, the shipwrecked and the captive, have found succour by his merits, and in all diseases, needs, and perils he hath been an aid. But in that many dead have been miraculously raised through him, there is made manifest unto the faithful the glorious working of the power of the Most High, exalting His Saint, and His is the honour and glory throughout the endless ages of eternity.”
(St. Bonaventure)

Verily: “The last shall be the first.”
A prediction that has never failed.

XI

EPILOGUE

Brother Masseo

“Yea, why run, why run, why run,
Men to such a simple one?”

Francis

“He chose the poorest to confound
Those who in sordid wealth abound!
He makes men love me, though not fair,
To prick vain beauty and high air
With me the least and worst of all,
He maketh human values fall!”

Brother Masseo

“Now we know why thou art sought
Yea, to bring vain pride to nought.
God hath shown full well in thee,
Strength and wealth are vanity,
Noble birth and comeliness,
When alone are nothingness.”

(Fabian Gussenhoven, O. F. M.)

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